EASTER NUMBER. "THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK": NEW SERIAL BY J. FINNEMORE.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 535. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 1ST, 1899. ONE PENNY.

Influenza :

(The After Effects)

How to regain lost Strength is one of the most troublesome problems a medical man is called upon to deal with. Disease itself soon passes away, but in nearly every instance some obstinacy is left behind. Influenza, for instance, yields readily enough to a well directed form of strengthening treatment, but the after feelings of Languor, Depression, and Loss of Strength, are indeed obstinate troubles to permanently remove.

These are just the cases where Guy's Tonic proves so Valuable. This is not surprising when it is borne in mind that this Valuable Medicine actually strengthens the walls of the Stomach, the very Organ that is called upon to supply the Frame with sufficient Nourishment to maintain Health as well as to build up the System generally. Nothing is so conducive to Health of Body and Vigour of Mind as this safe and reliable Vegetable Tonic.

If you are Pale, Anæmic, or very Thin, or have become Weakened by overwork, Worry, Excesses, or Fatigue, fortify your System and reinforce your Strength by a few doses of Guy's Tonic. Remember, ordinary tonics will not do, it must be this Nourishing Vegetable Preparation. Guy's Tonic contains certain strengthening properties peculiar to itself. It is rich in the exact material needed to bring back lost strength.

"Vitalise the System."

Mr. B. HOWARD, the Evangelist, of Ryall Grove, Earl's Croome, Worcestershire, writes:

"After a bad turn of Influenza I know nothing on earth so suitable as Guy's Tonic to build up the wreckage, vitalise the System, and give one nerve and force. When I received the Tonic, I said to Mrs. Howard, 'Now this is Life itself'; and if in future these enlarged bottles of Guy's Tonic are to be sold for 2s 9d., the Public will find Guy's Tonic not only Best but Cheapest."

Guy's Tonic deserves British support because it is a British product throughout, and because it is prepared by Skilled British Pharmacists from the formula of an English Physician.

Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle, is on sale at all Chemists and Stores.

10'6 Allen Foster & Co 10'6

SOLE MAKERS OF THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES

Buy Direct by Parcels Post from the Leading Firm of London Manufacturers.

Great Bargains in Ladies' Costume Skirts, in Black and Navy Serge (lined throughout). Price only 3/11; carriage paid, 5d. extra.

Design No. 94. 10/6

Design No. 94.

HALF-A-GUINEA.

Design No. 94 is a truly marvellous creation as a Costume. It stands unrivalled in point of value, style, and appearance—acknowledged everywhere **the best Half-Guinea Costume of the Season.** It is produced in the excellent **Venetian Cloth** or in the **Specialite Serge**—two grand cloths, unsurpassed for wear and durability. It is a **velvet trimmed** Costume with bodice and sleeves lined. It has a pretty pleated front and fits tight to the figure. The skirt is cut full and well-made. Truly marvellous value, and only **10/6** Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra; or Skirt alone, **5/6**; carr. 6d. extra.

Design No. 97. 10/6

Design No. 97.

HALF-A-GUINEA.

Design No. 97 is the smart and fashionable Chesterfield Coat and Skirt. It consists of a tailor-made single-breasted coat, with velvet collar, and full, well-made skirt. This smart Costume is made in the smooth-faced **Venetian Cloth** or in the **Specialite Serge** for **Half-a-Guinea.** Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra. The Skirt alone can be had at **5/6**; Carriage, 5d. Colours in either cloth are: Black, Navy, Electric, Blue-Grey, Myrtle, Brown, Fawn, Bronze-Green, Moss, Dark Grey, Purple.

New SPRING SKETCH BOOK OF FASHIONS sent Post Free on application.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

The London Manufacturers,

17 ROSCOE STREET, GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Digitized by Google

COFFEE WITHOUT DREGS.

GOOD! ITS MASON'S

MASON'S ESSENCE OF COFFEE AND CHICORY

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

ALSO TRY
MASON'S WINE ESSENCES
AND
MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3 three assorted 1/8.

Agents Wanted.

Manufacturers—
NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL
BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,
SUCH AS
Sick Headache, Constipation,
Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,
Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.
SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.
In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.
Prepared only by the Proprietor,
THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.
Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."*

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors, **66 Pinsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

ZOX

CURES

NEURALGIA

Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

PURE, HARMLESS, AND NON-APERIENT.

Do not be persuaded to take a substitute, there is nothing as good as **ZOX.**

Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.

ZOX Co., 11 Hatton Garden, E.C.

FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

JUNO CYCLES

ARE THE VERY BEST AND MOST UP-TO-DATE.

Carriage Paid. Cash Discount.

Write for New Season's List.

JUNO Cycles and Accessories sent Post Free.

LISTS POST FREE

Road Racer, £10. 16s. 6d. Monthly.

	Monthly		Monthly		Monthly
£10	16/8	£12	20/-	£14 14s.	24/6
£10 10s.	17/6	£12 12s.	21/-	£15 15s.	26/3

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO. Ltd.,
Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

Typewriters, £9 9s. 15s. 9d. Monthly.

You will be pleased with CHANCELLOR SOAPS.

That's why we want YOU to try them. As First Prize we offer a £300 HOUSE, and hundreds of other prizes. By using Chancellor Soaps and saving your wrappers till June you get the best and cheapest Soaps extant, you may get the House or a 50 guinea Piano, you will probably get a splendid Lady's Silver Watch, or if not you must get a money Prize.

Every Competitor gets one.
GET A BAR TO-DAY! - **Won't You?**

Send 4d. for Sample Bar

GIVEN AWAY
HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES - EVERY COMPETITOR GETS ONE OR A £300 HOUSE
LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.
CHANCELLOR SOAPS

to 13 Clerkenwell Road, London.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

INVESTED FUNDS £10,000,000.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.
FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

COMFORT, CLEANLINESS AND CURE
FOLLOW THE USE OF
Dr. PAUL'S WHITE PILE OINTMENT.
Gives ease at once and effectually removes Piles, Cracks, Fissures and Ulcerations.
In boxes 1/- & 2/6 each. Post free 1/2 & 2/9
PENN & CO., 89, BLACKFRIARS ROAD, LONDON, S.E.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES . .
EASTER NUMBER.

No. 535.] For the Week ending April 1st, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

THE SIGHTLESS EYE

By JOHN G. ROWE

THE flaming Indian sun was beginning to dip below the horizon, as the officers of the 10th Cavalry, stationed at Cawnpore, dropped into the mess room by twos and threes.

"I tell you it is a fact," one officer was remarking to half a dozen others. "I have seen the thing placarded all over the town—a human eye painted over a triangular blood-red background. The eye was done perfectly, as if by some native genius, but the strange part of the thing was, there was no sight in it—no eyeball. It resembled for all the world the sightless eye of a statue."

"Bah!" said one of his listeners. "Some quack advertisement or other."

"No, not so, for underneath it in Hindostani were these words: 'The eye is sightless; the soul of India sleeps; it is not yet time.'"

There was a murmur of amazement among the group and then a dead silence which was presently broken by the observation from Captain Thompson, a tall, broad-shouldered Scotsman.

"Percival is quite right. I have also seen the thing several times in my peregrinations round the town. What it meant, though, I could not tell, as I do not know Hindostani as well as you, Harry, old man. But the eye is to be seen sure enough, you fellows. Specimens may not be very plentiful round the cantonments, but the artist has not been sparing of either his talent or his paint in the native quarters of the town. If any of you unbelievers care to stroll round that way you can see and judge for yourselves."

At this suggestion most of his auditors smiled, while one or two placed their fingers to their noses in a most expressive way. It was well known that the atmosphere and sanitary conditions of the native part of the town were none of the best. Very few of the white residents cared to visit that particular region oftener than they could possibly help.

"I don't see for the life of me," broke in a boyish subaltern, "what you are all getting into such a stew about, making a mountain out of a molehill. It's only those old fakirs at their tricks again, I'll be sworn! They're always at it! Let 'em alone, I say; they'll never do any real harm."

All rights reserved.]

The majority seemed to concur in this opinion, and the discussion of the mysterious "sightless eye" was soon allowed to drop for other and more convivial topics.

Captain Harry Percival, however, was by no means satisfied with the construction his brother officers were inclined to put upon the curious placard. He felt convinced there was some deep and hidden mystery behind it. What meant those words in Hindostani below the sign:—"The eye is sightless; the soul of India sleeps; it is not yet time"? They seemed to him to have only one possible interpretation, and that was, that they were meant as a secret signal from the chiefs of some conspiracy to its members. And what could such conspirators be plotting but the downfall of British supremacy in the land? treason and revolt, probably, against Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria.

The bare thought almost took his breath away. He remembered the "chupatties," or little cakes, which were so mysteriously distributed among the Sepoys immediately prior to the horrible Mutiny of '57, and which propagated the seeds of revolt throughout the entire peninsula. Might not this extraordinary placard of an "unseeing eye," with its certainly pregnant inscription, have a similar meaning to those innocent-looking "little chupatties" be, in other words, the signal agreed upon by the natives for a general uprising.

Captain Percival was greatly perturbed, but he did not care to hint the dread suspicions, which had fastened upon him in spite of his utmost efforts to reason himself out of them to any of his brother officers just yet. He had no real grounds for his fears, beyond the strange equivocal motto which appeared beneath the mysterious sign, and to hint what was passing through his mind would be sure only to bring down upon him the ridicule and banter of the whole regiment.

He retired to his room that night, feeling very ill at ease, for this cabalistic placard had quite got upon his nerves, and, as he stood by the open window, in order to let what little air there was moving cool his fevered brow, his eyes saw not the twinkling stars overhead or the dark landscape. They pictured nothing but that mystic sign of a sightless human eye standing out boldly

Digitized by Google

Two pairs of strong arms dragged him from the bed.

from a triangular red background. To his vivid imagination the eye seemed to be swimming in a sea of blood——*human blood*.

At last, with a great effort of the will, the young fellow put the haunting chimera from him, and, undressing quickly, he got into bed and composed himself for sleep. It came to him at last, though he lay tossing about for long enough beforehand, vainly striving to put the vision of that "sightless eye" from his mind.

Tired out with the day's exertions, he was sleeping a deep, dreamless sleep, when all at once he was awakened by what he never afterwards could really tell. He made a move as though to sit up, when, horror of horrors, what was this? At the first movement he made, some sort of a gag was thrust by invisible hands into his mouth, effectually preventing him from uttering a cry, and, at the same moment, two pairs of strong arms dragged him from the bed.

Dumfoundered and dismayed Captain Percival stared round him. The lamp still burnt low on the dressing-table, and, by its faint illumination, he made out some half a dozen dusky-skinned, turbaned forms gathered round him. But what immediately fascinated him, while it at the same time sent a cold shiver down his spine, was the startling discovery that on the forehead of each of these strange nocturnal intruders was painted an eye, similar in every respect to that of the mystic sign which had caused him such uneasiness.

The singular device flickered and glowed with an uncertain phosphorescent light in each instance, giving the silent, statuesque figures a most ghastly and weird aspect.

Even as he stood wondering whether this was not all some hideous nightmare, a couple of pistols were clapped to his head, and a stern voice whispered: "Dress yourself quickly!" Believing discretion in this case to be the better part of valour, the young officer hastily obeyed the mandate; then a heavy cloak or bag was thrown over his head and shoulders from behind, and he felt himself grasped tightly by either arm and led from the room.

Down the stairs he was conducted and out of the house, his captors making not the slightest noise even in unfastening the front door. Captain Percival could tell from the impatient stamping of a horse that some sort of a conveyance was in waiting, and he wondered where Morari Rao, his *kitmutgar*, or native valet, could be, not to have been roused by the entry of these midnight visitors. The next minute, Percival felt himself lifted bodily by several pairs of strong arms and placed inside a closed vehicle. His captors seated themselves on either side of him, still gripping him by the arms, as though these were not securely tied. Then the horse was whipped up, and off they rattled at a smart pace.

To say that the young officer was in a fog, would be but to feebly express his state of mind. Who were his captors and whatever did they want with him? It was quite clear, from the strange device they each wore painted on their foreheads, that they were connected in some way with the curious placard which had so aroused his suspicions, and a vague dread seized upon him—that dread of the unknown and mysterious, which is far more unnerving than that given rise to by any known perils.

Who could they be? Dacoits? banditti? Then if so, they would learn they had had all their trouble in kidnapping him for nothing. He smiled bitterly; they would never get a heavy ransom for his release.

Then the suspicion that they might be members of some vast secret organisation or conspiracy, which had for its object the overthrow of British power in the land, once more asserted itself; yet why should even these bother themselves about the kidnapping of so unimportant an individual as himself? Would they not be more likely to go for much higher game—say some of the officials of the Government? Finally, he asked himself, was it possible he was in the hands of some murderous and mysterious brotherhood like the old-time Thugs. His brave heart almost sickened at the dread thought. But why should even such wretches make prisoner of him, when they could very easily have strangled him in his sleep?

His brain was in a whirl; his mind in chaos; he could not understand the affair at all.

Meanwhile, the carriage was tearing along over the rough roads at a terrific rate, and the captain felt certain they must have already left the town far behind.

So reckless was the driving that often the vehicle was within an ace of capsizing. It rocked and swayed frightfully, and the captive felt sore all over from the unmerciful jolting long before the speed was in any way moderated. After about an hour the pace was slackened, and a few minutes later the vehicle came to a dead stop.

A few low-muttered words passed between his guards, and then he was assisted to alight, whereupon the vehicle at once rattled away. With a heavy hand on either shoulder, the young officer stepped along, but where his strange captors were taking him, he had not the faintest idea. After traversing some dozen yards, a voice said in broken English:

"Take care, Sahib, you are going down steps now!"

Percival felt himself descending a flight of broken and crumbling stone steps, and presently found himself on a level pavement again. From the damp, musty odour which assailed his nostrils he judged he was treading some underground passage.

Along this he was conducted some distance; then the cloak was suddenly whipped from over his head, and, when his eyes grew accustomed to the radiance of his surroundings, he found himself standing in the midst of a vast vault, richly carpeted and hung with gorgeous

Digitized by Google

tapestry. Luxurious ottomans and rugs were scattered about, and a soft mellow light was shed over all. As he stood in open-mouthed amazement, drinking in the richness of his surroundings, the myriad electric lamps that illuminated the place were suddenly turned on full, making the apartment one blaze of light. At the same instant, a heavy velvet hanging at one end of the vault was drawn aside by invisible agency, revealing, seated on cushions in a semi-circle, some score or so native chiefs.

They were all most magnificently attired in Oriental costume, but the central figure, who was raised some inches above the others by a daïs, outdid them all in splendour. His garments were simply ablaze with jewels and gold and silver ornaments, and his turban was surmounted by a plume of bird of paradise feathers. Two richly-bedizened attendants stood behind this personage and slowly waved large fans of peacock feathers over his head, while the entire back was taken up by a band of armed men, clad in the handsome and warlike chain-mail worn in bygone days by the fierce Mahratta cavalry. An officer amongst this martial array bore aloft a small swallow-tailed pennon of cloth of gold.

There on his own forehead gleamed a great eye.

Captain Percival thought of a surety he must be in dreamland. This was all too unreal. He would wake up shortly and find he had been the victim of a very vivid dream, brought on, doubtless, by his brooding over the strange placard so late. As in a trance, he heard a loud voice, speaking in Hindostani, bid him advance, and almost involuntarily he obeyed.

Detaining grasps on either shoulder made him halt a yard or two in front of the gay semi-circle, and now it dawned upon him that after all this was no dream, but a very stern reality. He looked more closely at the glittering throng before him, and a cold shiver swept over him as he saw now for the first time that in the centre of each dark forehead, just as in the case of his kidnappers, gleamed that terribly mysterious "sightless eye." It shone with no mere phosphorescent flicker now, though beams of dazzling light shot from each of those awful eyes.

"What, oh, Heaven, does all this mystery mean?" Percival asked himself. "What is about to happen?"

In vain his bewildered glance wandered round the assembly to see if he could recognise a single face. He was baffled. Over the lower part of each individual's features hung a veil of black silk, which completely concealed the identity of the wearer.

Again a voice addressed him in Hindostani, and it appeared to come from the central and chief figure.

"*Feringhee*, we give thee welcome and trust thy stay with us will be long and pleasant. That it be so will depend entirely upon thyself. Unbind his arms and release his tongue. We would have him answer certain questions."

While his guards were untying the ropes which bound his arms, and removing the gag from his mouth, the captain was cudgelling his brains to think where and when he had heard that voice before. For the life of him he could not recall, but he looked closer at the speaker and strove desperately to penetrate the mask.

"Now, *Feringhee*," again spoke the Unknown, "listen well to what we say to thee, for on thy reply will depend thy life. Thou beholdest in me the lineal descendant of the ancient Mahratta Peishwas. Hunooman, the monkey god has revealed unto me in a dream that I am the one chosen to free my native land from the hated grasp of the White Queen, to do that which Dundoo Punt, commonly called by your fellow-countrymen, Nana Sahib, failed to do, viz:—to drive out the white people and establish a Mahratta dynasty once more in Hindostan. The time to strike the blow for freedom was likewise revealed to me by the monkey god, though it would not arrive until there was to be found in India a white man, a *Feringhee*, who would bear upon his forehead, too, the symbol of the Sacred Eye. Thou, Percival Sahib, art that man—the Chosen of Hunooman! Thou dost bear on thy forehead the Living Eye. Behold, Mahrattas all, Sons of Sevajee the Great! Behold the Promised Sign—the Living Eye!"

To his own immeasurable horror and amazement, Captain Percival, even as the Mahratta chief uttered these words, felt a tingling, burning sensation on his forehead. He was about to raise his right hand to it, when one of his guards swung him half round, and he found himself facing a heavy, gold-mounted mirror. In it he beheld a full-length reflection of himself, and—Heaven above! Was he mad or dreaming?

There on his own forehead gleamed a great eye—not sightless like those around, but living, seeing apparently, the eyeball flashing forth fierce looks on every hand.

Percival stood as one turned to stone, gazing in something akin to superstitious terror at his image in the glass. Not so the assembled chiefs. As they beheld the marvellous occurrence, one and all sprang to their feet, and, drawing their tulwars, they clashed the blades together over their heads, at the same time making the chamber ring with their fierce cries. Then, sheathing their swords again, the whole crowd came swarming round the young officer with extended hands.

But he had recovered from the first shock of surprise and horror, and now, with a sweep of his arms, he hurled aside the one or two who stood between him and the central figure on the dais, and shouted:

"Base traitors! I know not what devilish sorcery or trickery you have been practising on me, but this I do know, that I am a loyal subject of Her Majesty, and here and now will I punish you, arch-rebel, who have dared to utter such treason before a soldier of your Queen!"

Ere one of those surrounding him could prevent him, the gallant officer made a spring, caught the ringleader on the dais by the throat, and, in a moment, both were struggling in fierce conflict on the thickly-carpeted floor. In a trice, however, they were torn apart, but not before Percival had snatched the mask from the other's face and disclosed to his astonishment the swarthy features of Morari Rao, his own native servant.

The captain was quickly reduced to helplessness once more, and, as he lay panting from his exertions and overcome with astonishment, the rogue he had unmasked, in a frenzy of chagrin and rage kicked him savagely and vindictively again and again.

"Away with him to one of the dungeons!" the villian screamed. "Away with him and see that you guard him well! Your lives will pay the forfeit if he escapes! The success of the great and sacred cause we are all embarking upon depends upon his safe-keeping."

Unable to resist, Percival was dragged from the vault, down a short flight of stone steps, and thrown into a damp, foul cell opening off a long, narrow gallery. The door was locked and bolted upon him, and he was left to the bitterness of his own reflections. It was pitch dark in the cell, and, after a while, despite the novelty and peril of his situation, drowsiness assailed him and he fell into a sound slumber.

How long he had slept he had no means of knowing, but suddenly he was aroused by a low rumbling noise and a bright light flooded the cell.

To his amazement he saw that a portion of the stone wall had rolled aside, and in the aperture stood a white-robed, dark-visaged form with a lantern in one hand.

"Hist, Sahib! I am a friend. I am Sadjee Bassa, the poor Hindoo whom you pulled out of the stream when he was drowning. I have come to set you at liberty. Morari Rao seeks your life for that insult you offered him. He will never let you depart from this place alive. But I will aid you to escape in return for your past kindness."

The speaker glided up to the prisoner, and, with a few deft slashes of a knife, freed his arms and legs. Percival, in delighted amaze, scrambled to his feet and began stammering out his thanks to his rescuer; but the latter placed his finger on his lips, and taking up the lantern again beckoned to the young officer to follow him. His strange guide led him through several passages until they reached a flight of steps leading upwards. The Hindoo pressed a spring in the wall of the passage, and a great slab at the top of the steps, and which had hitherto barred all exit, rose on end like a trapdoor. Quickly mounting the stairs, the pair passed through the opening, and Percival found himself standing amongst the ruins of the old palace of Bithoor, the former stronghold of the dethroned Peishwa, of the Mahrattas, Baiee Rao, and also of his adopted son, Nana Sahib of infamous memory.

The place was burnt by Havelock's army after the defeat of the Sepoys at Cawnpore.

The discovery of where he was and the associations of the place at once recalled to the Englishman's mind the strange words of his rascally servant, Morari Rao. The fellow had claimed to be the lineal descendant of the ancient Mahratta Peishwas, or sovereigns, and declared his intention of emulating the atrocities of Nana Sahib in an attempt to upset British rule, and establish a Mahratta empire again. He was recalled to himself by the guide laying a hand on his, and whispering:

"Go now, *Feringhee*, go in peace! I have saved your life in return for the past. Fly! Save yourself! Listen to me. When you reach the city of Cawnpore, stay not in it another day. The Time of Fate has come! The Sacred Eye of Siva, the God of Destruction, is no longer sightless. It is open—seeing! It flashes forth glances of rage, and hate, and vengeance upon its foes! The appearance of the Living Eye upon thy brow, O Englishman, has inaugurated the great uprising. Ere to-morrow's sun has set, the Living Eye will have replaced the Sightless one on every placard throughout the Mahratta country. Even now, fast messengers are speeding in every direction, carrying the news that the Promised Sign has appeared, and to-morrow's eve will see the whole Maharatta race in armed revolt against the White Queen and her minister. Fly, *Feringhee*, while yet thou may'st, for to-morrow will see the blood of your countrymen flow like water!"

Before Percival could make a move to detain him, the Hindoo turned and disappeared among the ruins of a once handsome colonnade.

The Englishman was not anxious to linger in that spot, so he set off at once in the direction of Cawnpore. He gained the high road without meeting any sentinel, and then he hurried forward at his fastest pace, sometimes running, at other times dropping into a walk to recover his wind. He met not a native on the way, but as he drew near the city, he caught sight of several of the signs of the Sightless Eye painted on dead walls and tree trunks. He did not stop to look at the first few, but all at once he remembered the words of his deliverer, Sadjee Bassa, and he halted for a moment to examine one on the crumbling wall of an old bungalow.

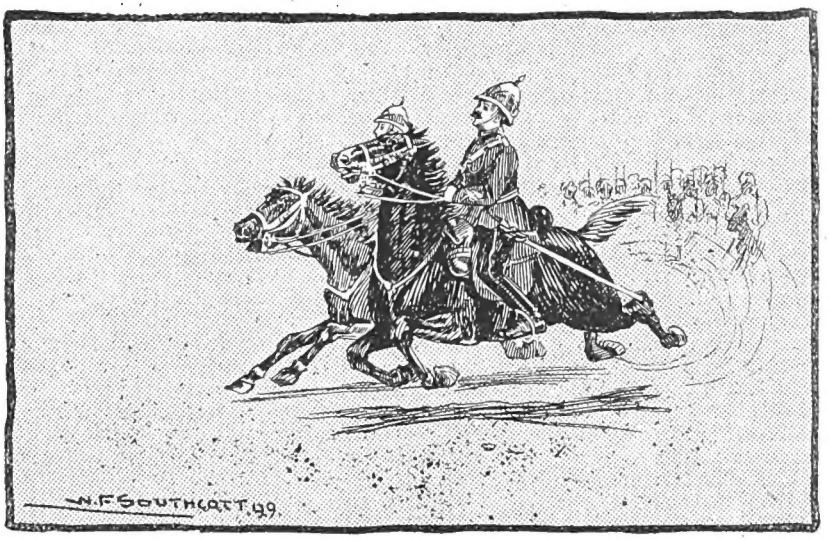
It was no longer a *sightless eye* that was pictured before him, but one that almost seemed to live—to be darting a look of vengeful fury upon him. The eyeball had been painted in with such marvellous skill as almost to make one believe the eye was endowed with life. A daub of paint had obliterated the other motto, and in its place was this one:—"The eye sees; the soul of India awakes; it is time."

Like letters of fire these words seemed to sear his very brain. He gave a groan of agonised despair. Heavens! Would he yet be in time to avert the dread calamity which was impending? With a heartfelt prayer, he set off once more at headlong speed.

Digitized by Google

The bugles in the cantonments of Cawnpore were sounding the *réveille*, when a panting and dishevelled figure presented itself at the door of Colonel Mansell's residence and desired immediate audience with him. It was his subordinate officer, Captain Percival. The latter quickly informed his superior of his extraordinary adventures, and the day was not much older before the astounding news he had to tell was being flashed all over the country.

Quick to see the necessity for an immediate attempt to capture the ringleaders in the plot, the colonel acceded to Percival's proposal to take a strong force and search the ruins. In less than an hour that young officer and Captain Thompson galloped out of the town at the head of a squad of cavalry.



The horses were put to their utmost speed.

The horses were put to their utmost speed, and fairly flew over the ground, and very soon the ruins of the old palace hove in sight. The secret entrance to the vaults below was easily found by Captain Percival, and, with the heavy sledges they had brought with them, the soldiers speedily shattered the slab and laid bare the subterranean stairway. Lighting lanterns, they were preparing to descend, when out of the inky darkness at the foot of the steps came a blaze of fire and a volley of musketry crashing amongst them. Several gallant fellows fell, but, with a ringing shout, Percival and Thompson leapt down the steps and their men swarmed after them.

A fierce and deadly hand-to-hand conflict now ensued in that gloomy tunnel below the earth's surface. The trapped rebels fought like so many fiends, and no quarter was asked or given. Pistols cracked, and sabre clashed against tulwar, while yells, oaths, and the stamping of feet drowned any cry for mercy that might have been uttered.

Suddenly there came a dead silence, a silence broken only by the groans of the wounded and the dying. The survivors of the rebel band had fled away into the deeper recesses of the crypt, and Captain Percival, knowing his men could never hope to overtake the nimble rascals among the mazy passages, which he had good reason to believe honeycombed the earth in every direction beneath the ruins, ordered them to fall back again to the top of the steps. They carried their wounded comrades up with them, and had nearly all regained the upper regions when a wild figure came dashing along the gallery towards them.

Captain Percival recognised the man at once as his rescuer the night before, the Hindoo, Sadjee Bassa.

"Fly for your lives!" he shrieked, "Fly! The Peishwa means to blow the whole up rather than be taken!"

In dismay and alarm, the soldiers, dragging their injured comrades with them, rushed from the fatal spot, and they had barely got out of the ruins, when there came a terrific explosion, and the earth opened to emit a mighty eruption of flame and smoke. Many of the soldiers had narrow escapes from the falling *débris*, but fortunately none were injured.

The self-styled Peishwa, however, with all his fellow-conspirators, had perished in that awful holocaust, and India was saved from another Sepoy Mutiny.

Digitized by Google

A BARGAIN IN GEMS.

Mr. Samuel Mortimer gaily hummed a popular air as he made his way from the suburban railway station towards his home, where his coming was eagerly awaited by his little wife.

There were at least three causes for this happy state of mind. Firstly, he had unexpectedly come into possession of the sum of five pounds; this was for work done for a friend two years before, but as payment had been so long delayed he had for some months regarded it as a "bad debt." Secondly, he had that day been informed by his employer that the value of his services was to be recognised at the end of the week by an increase of salary. And, finally, to-morrow would be Nellie's birthday, and, as it was the first occasion of the kind since their marriage four months ago, they intended to celebrate it by a family party in the evening and have a good time.

The access of wealth represented by the five pounds would enable him to give his wife a really good birthday present, which gladdened the heart of Mr. Mortimer. Altogether, he was more pleased with himself than he had been since his wedding day.

He was walking quickly along a dark portion of one of the streets through which he had to pass to reach his home, when he was suddenly stopped by a man who asked him, in a low tone, if he wanted to buy a jewel to give to his wife. This question so strangely coincided with his own thoughts that he involuntarily asked to see the treasure.

"It's a ruby, sir," said the man, holding the stone towards the clerk. "Come under this lamp-post, and you can see it better."

They walked a few paces, and under the gas-lamp the man handed the stone to Mortimer for examination.

"It's dirt cheap, sir," continued the would-be seller; "it's come down in our family, but I can't get rid of it now we are so poor, 'cos the pawnbrokers would think I'd stole it, and I ain't got no proof to show how long it's been in our family. I wants two qu——I mean two soverins for it."

Now, it happened that Mr. Mortimer had had some experience of rubies, and even under the poor light of the street lamp he could see that the stone was worth considerably more than the sum asked. He had some misgiving that the transaction was not exactly a proper one, but his cupidity and his desire to please Nellie by giving her a handsome birthday present overcame his scruples. He requested the man to walk to a well-lighted, shop close by, so that he might better examine the stone and after having done so he gave the man two of the five gold coins which had come to him so unexpectedly that day, and pocketed the ruby.

Nellie was highly pleased with the stone, and the husband and wife, after considerable discussion, decided that a further portion of the five pounds should be spent in having the gem placed in a gold setting for use as a brooch.

The party went off splendidly on the following evening. Mrs. Mortimer exhibited the ruby to her admiring and envious relations, telling them that dear Samuel had purchased it for her, but not mentioning the exact circumstances of the transaction. "Dear Samuel" himself was so pleased with things in general, that on the next day he made several blunders in his work at the office and imperilled the promised rise.

That evening—it was Friday—Mr. Mortimer had to stay late at the office on extra work, and when he arrived at the station to take the train it had lost its usual busy aspect. On entering the carriage he was agreeably surprised to meet a City chum, who had taken the train at a station farther east. They had the compartment to themselves and were soon engaged in a lively conversation, in the course of which Mr. Mortimer naturally told his friend that he had purchased a magnificent ruby.

"I don't mind telling you in confidence," he said, with a knowing nod, "that I got it dirt cheap."

Then, growing still more confidential, he related the circumstance of the purchase.

"Do you think it all square, old man?" asked Mr. Jackson. "Some of those things are rather queer, you know. Makes me think of the tale I have just read—'The Red Stone of Delhi.' Read it?"

Mr. Jackson was a great novel reader, but Mortimer read very little except newspaper reports and certain sporting intelligence. Mortimer hadn't the least idea whether "The Red Stone of Delhi" was the last new and popular novel, or a portion of the Arabian Nights, so he endeavoured to cover his ignorance by assuming a lofty tone.

"No, I only read—er—classics and—er—scientific works, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"Well, you ought to read it," asserted Jackson. "The idea is a bit hackneyed, of course, but it's well worked out, and will interest you because it is about a ruby. A British officer steals it from the head of an Indian god and brings it with him to England, and the priests track him in order to recover the stone, and the officer is found one morning in his own room, dead, with a dagger in his back. That's the kind of thing, but it's splendidly written. One of the most sensational things that I ever read. Why, I've got it in my pocket, so I have. Here you read it; it's not very long."

"Do you mean to say," queried Mortimer in a scared tone, as he took the book, "that the priests murdered the officer to get the stone back?"

"Of course they did! Those beggars wouldn't stop at anything to get back one of their holy stones. I say, though," as the idea struck him. "Suppose your stone was something of that kind? It might be, you know."

"Oh no, it isn't!" returned Mortimer, but his cheek, paled and his voice trembled. "That would be awful, wouldn't it? But I am sure it isn't."

"Well, it's quite likely," remarked Jackson. "Anyhow, you read that tale; it's fine, I tell you. Hulloa, this is my station. Tat-a, see you again soon."

Mr. Samuel Mortimer felt decidedly uneasy as he opened the door of his suburban residence. Jackson's remark about the ruby had worried him considerably; he felt inclined to throw the paper-covered romance into somebody's back garden, but it fascinated him in spite of himself and he felt that he must read it. His wife was out that evening, and he did not expect her home until about eleven; so, after having lighted the gas and

Digitized by Google

eaten the cold supper which she had laid ready for him, he drew his chair nearer the light and began to run through the story.

He did not wish to wade through all the opening chapters; Jackson had given him the outline of those; he wanted to see how the priests tracked the British officer, and finally murdered him in order to recover the stone.

That was the part which interested him most.

It was certainly a thrilling romance, and it worked so upon the feelings of Mr. Mortimer that when once he had fairly got into it he scarcely dared to look up. He had just reached the point where the officer is found face downwards upon the floor, with an ornamental dagger sticking in his back, and a Hindoo disappearing out of the window, when there was a slight report, something struck him on the head, the light flared up, and a loud knocking was heard at the front door.

With a cry of fright Mortimer dropped the book and sprang to his feet, glaring wildly round the room; then he heaved a sigh of relief as he realised that the chimney of his lamp had cracked, a piece of it striking him as it fell, and that his wife was knocking at the street door for admittance.

Mortimer made no reference to the subject to the partner of his joys and sorrows, and accounted for his pallid appearance by saying that he had been working very hard, and was very tired. His wife thereupon declared she would never again be out at night when he came home, but would be there to attend to him, and that a good night's rest was what he wanted, poor dear.

It certainly was what he wanted, but he didn't get it. His slumbers were troubled by hideous dreams of Hindoo priests and murdered British officers, and he awoke in the morning but little refreshed by eight hours spent in bed. All through the morning the feeling of discomfort remained with him and even the increase in his weekly wages failed to restore his equanimity.

He had an uneasy suspicion that he was being followed on his way home that afternoon. He looked back continually, but although it was broad daylight he could not substantiate the suspicion. Of course, he saw a man behind him whenever he looked, but there was nothing to denote that these men were in any way connected with Hindoo idols. He half resolved to kick Jackson the next time he saw him, for telling him about the story; and yet—there *might* be something in that gentleman's suggestion.

A couple of hours' gardening that afternoon and a quiet day on Sunday had a soothing effect upon Mortimer's nerves. It is true that, when his wife reminded him that he taken no steps to have the ruby set in a brooch, he dismissed the subject in such a hasty manner that she began to ask herself whether his affection was already on the wane; but by Monday morning he had almost recovered his usual spirits.

Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer had a pleasant little habit, or custom, in which they indulged every morning when Samuel departed for the City. She would go to one of the front windows and watch him part of the way down the street, while he would half turn at every few steps and lovingly shake one glove at her. This Monday morning the usual thing occurred; but as Nellie happened to have several things to do that morning, she only stood at the window for a second and then disappeared.

Mortimer had turned and shaken his glove, but not perceiving his wife he had gazed at the window for a longer period than usual, still walking. He was brought to a sense of his surroundings by colliding rather forcibly with someone coming in the opposite direction.

"I beg your par——," began Mortimer in his most apologetic tone, but the words simply froze on his lips when he found himself face to face with a man in the garb of a Hindoo priest, with flowing robe, turban and grave copper-coloured visage.

Heavens! What did this mean? In utter bewilderment and trembling in every limb, Mortimer turned and, glared at the figure of the man, who had passed on with a grave bow in acknowledgement of the half-uttered apology. Was it right, after all? was he, too, being tracked, like the officer in the story?

Mortimer never knew how he got to the office that day, nor how he went through the daily routine of business he had a faint notion that he had written the words "yours for ever" at the end of one business letter and had played havoc with one column of figures, but he was in a dream all the time. On his homeward journey, he peered here and there in the darkness to discover some trace of the Hindoo priest, but he reached home without mishap.

"My dear, what do you think?" demanded his wife as he seated himself at the table. "It is quite a piece of good fortune, I declare. I found that old gold brooch which Uncle James gave me some years ago, and I can make that ruby fit into it quite splendidly, If you were to bend one of the corner pieces just a little with your pincers the frame would hold the stone quite securely and then I could wear the brooch."

"You musn't!" cried Samuel, so hastily and fiercely that Nellie gave a little start and a cry of surprise. "That is," he added more quietly, "I—don't think—it would be quite safe, my dear."

"I can't think what has come to you lately," said Mrs. Mortimer unsteadily, drawing out her pocket handkerchief and conveying it to her eyes; "you seem to be getting very unkind."

"My work has been rather trying during the last day or so," explained Mortimer lamely. "There, don't cry; only don't wear that brooch—you might lose the stone, my love."

When Mr. Samuel Mortimer was ready to depart on the next morning he peeped out of the window for a sign of the Hindoo priest and felt slightly relieved at not seeing him; but he had not gone half the length of the street before he saw the grave figure walking slowly in the direction of his home. At the risk of losing his train and being late for work, Samuel turned and literally ran back to his villa residence. He did not go in, but secreted himself behind some of the shrubs in what the house agent called the front garden, and there in a crouching position watched the passing priest.

The Hindoo came with the same measured tread until he reached the front gate, where he stopped and gazed lengthenly and searchingly at the house. It seemed to Mortimer that he stood thus for several minutes; it was quite a quarter of an hour after the Hindoo's departure before Mortimer summoned up courage to slink away in the direction of the station.

If Mortimer's mental condition had been bad on the Monday, it was simply lamentable on the Tuesday. He couldn't get through his work, he answered questions in the most ridiculous manner, and he went about the office in a way that attracted the attention of everybody. Would the Hindoo attempt to waylay him on his homeward journey? He might fancy that Mortimer was

carrying the ruby about with him for greater safety, and murder him. Or he might enter the house during the day and— And then a terrible thought took possession of Mortimer's mind. Suppose this fiend should murder Nellie?

When this last terrible thought came to him he was wandering during lunch time in a bye-street of the City. He had not attempted to enter a restaurant, he really did not know it was lunch time. He stood still as though struck by a blow, and passed his hand over his forehead. What was to be done?

Thud!

Something struck him violently in the back, and with a cry of horror he staggered forward and fell upon the pavement.

"It's all over with me!" he cried wildly. "Tell Nellie that the priest did it."

"What's the matter with you?" asked a voice.

"Take the dagger out of my back," gasped Mortimer feebly. "It may furnish some clue to the assassins of an innocent man."

Then he felt himself pulled unceremoniously to his feet and found two fellow clerks looking wonderingly at him.

"Look here, Sammy," said one of them, "if I didn't know you were an abstemious man I should think that you'd got 'em. What is the matter with you?"

"Where is the dagger? Has it made much of a wound?" asked Samuel trying to feel the small of his back with his right hand, at the same time nearly dislocating his neck in an effort to catch a glimpse of the dagger.

"Here, you had better go home," remarked one of the clerks decisively. "You must be ill. I only slapped you on the back. Charlie you see him into the train and I'll explain to the chief."

Mrs. Mortimer's surprise and anxiety at herhusband's early return, and his strange appearance, may be imagined. She would have sent for the doctor, but Samuel declined to allow her, and, in the end, in order to satisfy her, he made a clean breast of the secret that was rendering his life miserable.

Mrs. Mortimer was, as she expressed it, "all of a flutter" She was convinced, equally with her husband that murder would be the end of it, unless the stone were restored to its rightful owner. They discussed the method of this restoration, and decided that if the Hindoo priest passed that way on the following morning, the gem should be handed to him; otherwise they would insert a discreet advertisement in the agony column of a popular daily. It never occurred to them that the Hindoo priest might not be a constant reader of that particular newspaper, or of any other; so profoundedly impressed were they with the far-reaching power of those who were tracing the ruby, that such a course seemed quite the proper one to take.

After this they felt more easy, but they took good care that the doors and windows should be well secured. About eight o'clock they were startled by a loud bang at the door; on venturing into the hall, hand in hand, they found that a note had been pushed in through the letter-box.

Tremblingly they returned to the room and read the few lines which were enclosed in the envelope. The message was brief but decisive:

If the ruby was not given up within twenty-four hours their doom was certain.

That settled it; they took it for granted that the Hindoo priest would be at his post on the morrow, and they would then hand the gem over to him. They found a small box with a tight-fitting lid, and in this they placed the ruby, packed in some cotton wool, ready for delivery.

They did not go to bed that night; it would have been useless; so they passed the weary hours of darkness in their chairs in a back room, starting at almost every one of the few sounds of the night hours.

At eight o'clock in the morning Samuel was waiting at the window, box in hand, for the arrival of the dreaded figure. Yes, there he was! With shaking legs Mortimer made his way to the front gate as the Hindoo approached it.

"Here it is!" he cried, hoarsely, as he seized the man's hand and pressed the box into it. His mouth and throat were so parched that he could scarcely utter the words. "It is in there, you'll find it all right. Now go away, for Heaven's sake, and don't track an innocent man like a bloodhound and drive him into his grave. *I* didn't steal it. Take it and go—go!"

Then Samuel staggered back to the hall and promptly fainted on the mat.

* * * * *

A fortnight later Mr. Samuel Mortimer was returning home at the very late hour of ten-thirty, having been detained at the office by work connected with the annual balancing of accounts.

The platform was almost deserted, and as Mortimer felt very tired he sat down on one of the wooden seats to await the coming of his train. Two men strolled along the p atform, and apparently not having observed him in his dark corner, stopped near him and began to talk.

"And how did you manage to get hold of it again?" asked one.

"It was the biggest joke in the world," returned the other with a laugh. "You know that I was hunting for Jimmy Millins, who took it out of my pocket when I had had a little drop, the day after we made that haul in Chester Square. Jimmy is a novice and doesn't properly know where to get rid of these things, so I guessed that if I could track him quickly I could have it all right.

"Well, I was riding in the train one night and I overheard two City clerks talking about a ruby. The partition of the compartments only went half way to the roof of the carriage, you see. Of course, I pricked up my ears and I found that Jimmy had sold it to one of them for two pounds. Then they went on talking about a romance of a stone being stolen from a Hindoo temple—you know the idea—and I found that the one who had got the ruby was a bit scared at the idea of being tracked by Hindoo priests, and it suddenly struck me that that would be an easy way of getting it back without running any risks, and at the same time it would teach that fellow not to buy stolen goods in the street.

"So I followed the fellow home, and togged up as a Hindoo priest—I've done a little stage work in my time—and I just scared the life out of him, and one night I pushed a threatening letter into his letter box."

"Did it work?"

"I should think it did! The fellow came out to me the next morning as I passed his house as usual, and fairly begged me to take it."

Both men laughed heartily, and at that moment the engine came puffing into the station. The speakers entered a smoking carriage, while poor Mortimer, half-mad with mortification and rage, forgot himself until it was too late and had to wait for the next train.

Geo. Day.

Digitized by Google

Concerning Kronstadt's Stolen Plans.

THE three o'clock bugle rang out clearly through the grim fortress.

It was an ordinary occurrence, yet Vladimir Strongoneff started guiltily as the brazen note rang out on the early morning air and feverishly flung a piêce of blotting-paper over a plan lying on the table.

Starting to his feet he glanced at the door; it was still closed. Unsatisfied, he flung it open and stepped out into the broad stone-flagged corridor; it was deserted. He walked to the end where a window was set in deep masonry, and through which the first streaks of dawn were breaking, to see if any one had crept down the corridor leading to the magazine.

He was apparently the only officer abroad at that early hour.

"*Batchouscha*, this traitor's work makes a rare coward of me," he exclaimed, re-entering his room. "Since I have mapped out this fortress for that infernal Von Virchow, not one moment's peace have I known. *Ei! Ei!* It has come to a pretty pass that I, heir to a princedom and a lieutenant in the Emperor's body guard, should sell the plans of Kronstadt to a spy of Bismarck."

The sun had risen before he retired to rest, and not many hours had elapsed before there came a sharp rap at the door, and a man, clad in a long dark blue military cloak, entered without awaiting permission.

"In the Tsar's name," he said briefly.

A cold sweat of apprehension burst out on the guilty man's face, as he started up in his bed.

"My business is with Count Vladimir Strongoneff, lieutenant in the Imperial Guard."

"I am he!" said Strongoneff.

The soldier approached the bed, tendering an envelope bearing the imperial seal.

Hastily tearing it open he read the following:

TO THE BOYARD, COUNT VLADIMIR STRONGONEFF,
LIEUTENANT IN THE IMPERIAL GUARDS,
KRONSTADT.

You are commanded to present yourself at the Palace to-day (Friday) at 8. p.m.

ALEXANDER, T.

Strongoneff perused the epistle three times, unable to determine whether the letter contained a veiled menace, or was prompted by an utterly inexplicable friendly impulse.

One thing was evident, the royal command could not be disobeyed.

"I will be ready in an hour," said Strongoneff briefly. "What is the hour?"

"Twelve, Count!"

The messenger saluted and left the room.

Strongoneff's sensation was not an enviable one as he rose and commenced to dress. He racked his fevered brain to discover a tangible reason for the Tsar's unexpected summons and failed.

Was his theft of the fortress' plans discovered, and was he called to St. Petersburg simply to be handed over to the police as a spy, and as such to be sent to Siberia?

The idea chilled him, but he dismissed the thought the next instant as puerile. Had there been a prospect of his being sent to the mines, he argued, a file of soldiers would have paid him a visit instead of an unannounced messenger.

Still, despite this encouraging argument, a vague, undefinable unrest possessed him as he crammed the fatal papers into his bosom and descended to the landing stage where a boat was in readiness to convey him to the capital.

On arriving at St. Petersburg, the messenger hailed a carriage which was waiting their arrival and told the driver to drive to the Palace.

"Why to the Palace?" asked Strongoneff, paling; "I am not due till eight."

"My orders were to take you there, Count," replied the messenger.

The vague unrest began to assume definite shape, Strongoneff realised the danger he ran in carrying such damning evidence of his treachery on his person, as the stolen plans of Kronstadt.

One thought was uppermost in his mind as he alighted at the Palace, and that was, the fatal plans must be destroyed as soon as possible.

"Prince Paul Fédor is awaiting you, Count," remarked the messenger, preceding Strongoneff into the Palace.

"Awaiting me?" echoed Strongoneff surprised.

"He has challenged you to a game of bezique," remarked the messenger. "Hearing four days ago, whilst visiting Kronstadt, that you were the most expert player in Petersburg, his Excellency decided to match his skill against your invincible play. The Lieutenant Count

Google

Vladimir Strongoneff," he cried, as flinging open a door, he ushered the Count into Prince Fédor's presence.

"Or rather Prince Vladimir Strongoneff, since your cousin is dead, eh, your Excellency," said Fédor genially, rising from a baize table to greet him.

"I was unaware of my cousin's decease, Excellency," said Strongoneff, with a start of surprise.

"Then I am the first to congratulate you," Fédor cried gaily. "Will you kindly take a seat at the table, Prince? I am anxious to pit my luck against yours."

"You do me too much honour," replied Strongoneff courteously, bowing to the assembled notabilities who had risen to greet him on his entrance.

The young lieutenant seated himself at the table like one in a dream. What could it all mean, this informal ushering into so select a circle. Was it the prelude to a disaster in which Siberia would figure largely?

Strongoneff played well, though his thoughts were far from the game.

Fédor lost gamely, and a peculiar smile flitted every now and again across his handsome face as he glanced ever and anon at the fleeting hours registered on the clock dial.

Six at last rang out from the ormulu timepiece on the mantel and Strongoneff rose.

"May I beg you to excuse me from further play, your Excellency?" said Strongoneff. "I must attend to a business letter I have to write, before I see the Emperor at eight."

"My dear Prince," cried Fédor, "I cannot hear of such a thing! You dine with me! Oh, I insist! I brook no denial, and as to a business letter, I can supply you with everything needful for the writing of same."

And so saying, Fédor linked his arm familiarly through that of Strongoneff and led him off to his apartments in the Palace.

It was impossible to get rid of the incriminating documents.

"There is my escritoire at your service," exclaimed Fédor, opening it. "Write your letter, my friend, and I will smoke a cigarette."

Strongoneff heartily reviled Fédor.

"Thanks," said he, with forced geniality. "I have altered my mind, my business is not so pressing that it cannot afford to wait."

"Bravo!" cried Fédor cheerily. "Bravo! dinner will not be kept waiting after all."

The unhappy lieutenant smiled with sickly geniality in acquiescence, one thought uppermost in his mind, he must rid himself of the Kronstadt plans before he had audience with the Emperor, yet the task seemed an impossible one with Fédor sticking to him with leech-like pertinacity.

The dinner dragged horribly, the clock dial indicating ten minutes to eight as he rose from the table.

"Ah!" cried Fédor gaily, "the hour for your audience with the Emperor is nigh now, eh, friend?"

"Yes, Prince, very close now," replied Strongoneff, a glimmer of hope darting athwart his brain. "So I will say adieu."

Three minutes, he argued, would be sufficient to destroy the plans which would send him to Siberia, if discovered on his person.

"Adieu, dear Prince?" echoed Fédor wonderingly. "Not adieu, for I am going to the Imperial apartment as well, so will accompany your Excellency."

Strongoneff's smiling face effectually concealed the the tempest of baffled passion, raging within his breast.

Fédor's conversation was particularly brilliant as the two strolled down the long corridor towards the Imperial apartments. Strongoneff's was dull and for the most part vacuous, which was not surprising considering the fear which possessed him.

The unreasoning terror which possessed him changed to panic, as the Chamberlain ushered him into the presence of the Tsar, and General Miglehoff, chief of the Secret Police.

"You will pardon me, my dear General," said Alexander courteously, "if I ask you to leave me alone with Prince Strongoneff," bowing to acknowledge the guilty man's salutation. "I have to speak privately with his Excellency."

"Certainly, sire," replied the General, bowing. "Am I to conclude that the audience is at an end?"

"No, General," answered Alexander with a smile. "Kindly return in a quarter of an hour."

Miglehoff bowed and moved towards the door.

"Ah, and General, have you left the prison pass I asked you for?"

Strongoneff grew ghastly pale on hearing the words.

"Yes, sire, it is to your left on the table."

"Ah! how stupid of me!" said Alexander, taking it up. "It is, I see, all in order, General."

"Yes, sire, it only needs the name of the person."

The next moment Miglehoff had gone, leaving Strongoneff almost dead with apprehension.

Siberia, writ in large letters, seemed to stretch across his horizon, he realised, to his horror, that he could not deny his guilt, for proofs which would have condemned him a thousand times were within his tunic.

"I am pleased to see you, Prince Strongoneff," said Alexander, as soon as alone.

Digitized by Google

The young lieutenant stammered out some unintelligible answer.

"Kindly take a seat, Prince"—Alexander indicated a chair—"and I will explain to you the reason why I summoned you to Petersburg. Your Excellency was doubtless surprised to receive the summons?"

"I confess that I was puzzled, sire," replied Strongoneff uneasily, seating himself.

"The reason was," said Alexander evenly, "that I imagined that you might be able to throw some light on a circumstance which has recently occurred."

Strongoneff glanced searchingly at the Emperor, who, leaning over the table, was scanning the prison order which he held.

"If I can, I shall be only too pleased to do so, sire," he said slowly.

A slight smile curled Alexander's lips.

"As you are from Kronstadt, you doubtless know to what I refer."

Strongoneff's face grew ashy as he heard the remark.

"I must still plead ignorance, sire," he said hoarsely, glancing almost appealingly at the stern face of his Emperor.

"Allow me to tell you then, Prince," said Alexander coldly, laying the order carefully in front of him on the table, "the plans of the fortress of Kronstadt have been stolen!"

"Impossible, sir!"

"There is no impossibility about it, your Excellency," replied the Tsar irritably. "They have been stolen! Can you throw any light on the affair, Prince?"

Alexander glanced scrutinisingly at the young lieutenant.

"I—I cannot, sire! Your news comes as a revelation to me."

"Indeed!" remarked Alexander placidly. "Well, I will continue the story. The plans were stolen for Count von Virchow, the German Ambassador, by a lieutenant in the Imperial Guard—You appear unwell, Prince," exclaimed the Emperor with assumed concern.

"It is only a spasm of the heart, sire. See—I—I am already better."

"That is well. I was wondering, your Excellency, if you considered Saghalien sufficient punishment for such treachery," remarked the Tsar, once more taking up the prison order.

"The mines!" ejaculated Strongoneff, starting to his feet. "Oh, Heaven! Not that!"

"You evince a strange interest in the fate of this lieutenant," said Alexander coldly. "I consider that he merits death."

"Sire," replied Strongoneff falteringly; "perhaps pressure was brought to bear on this—this lieutenant. We know not what prompted him to give—those plans to Germany."

"They have not yet been given," cried Alexander, "the traitor still holds them."

Strongoneff's face grew pallid with fear, and he swayed as he stood.

"I beseech your Majesty to tell me my fate," he cried hoarsely; "and to cease thus playing with me."

"You confess to your infamy?" cried Alexander, rising in his turn.

"I have no other course open, sire," said Strongoneff, hoarsely; "still, I will make what reparation I can in giving to your Majesty the plans which have worked my ruin."

He opened his tunic and presented the packet to the Tsar.

"I had expected to hear you say that you had repented your treachery," said Alexander, "that you had brought them on your person purposely, so as to be able to present them to me."

"I have not descended so low as to try and palliate my crime by a lie," replied Strongoneff, flushing.

"You had intended to give these to von Virchow today?"

"Yes, sire."

Alexander paced up and down the room for a few moments, then coming to a halt before the lieutenant, said:

"Prince, you are truthful to almost indiscretion's point, and by your own mouth have destroyed every plea for mercy that I was likely to mentally advance in your favour. Have you any reason to advance why I should not write your name—one of the noblest in Russia by the way—on that prison order and thus condemn you for life to the mines of Saghalien?"

"None, sire," replied Strongoneff in a low voice. "The sentence is but just."

The Tsar once more resumed his walk.

"Did you," said he, "desire to sell these plans to von Virchow, as a pure money-making concern?"

"No, sire."

"Kindly explain then, Prince, why you did so—I command you."

"I owed von Virchow one hundred thousand roubles," replied Strongoneff hoarsely. "He pressed for payment and threatened an exposure as I could not meet it. Such a course of action meant ruin and dismissal from the Army. He offered me as an alternative, the obtaining of the plans of Kronstadt, as a liquidation of the debt, and I, coward that I was, accepted to conceal a lesser shame by incurring a greater."

The Tsar went to an escritoire and opened a drawer.

"You are, I believe, engaged to the Countess Olga Murwona?"

Strongoneff's face worked convulsively.

"Yes, sire!" said he hoarsely.

"She is a beautiful girl," remarked Alexander reflectively, rummaging away in the drawer. "It is hard on her, that her *fiancé* will be a felon."

Strongoneff hung his head, clenching his hands till the nails pierced his palms.

"It was a pity, Prince, that you did not think of the

Digitized by Google

shame you would bring on her, before you stole Kronstadt's plans," added the Tsar mercilessly.

"It was chiefly for her sake I did it, sire."

"Eh?" exclaimed the Tsar, looking up. "Her sake? Did she, then, know of your course of action?"

"Heaven forbid, sire! It was to spare her the ignominy of seeing me dismissed from the service that I did this."

Alexander drew a small roll of paper from the drawer and, taking up the prison order, went over to Strongoneff.

"Prince," said he with a genial smile, "would you like a cigar?" He picked one off the table and presented it to the amazed lieutenant, then, giving him the order, added: "This will do to light it with."

Strongoneff took the paper like a man in a dream, then reeled like a drunken man.

"Sire," he gasped, falling on one knee, "to burn this mean's pardon."

"Well," said Alexander gaily, "is the thought a displeasing one?"

"Oh, sire—" He ceased to speak, his gratitude being too great for words.

"Come, your Excellency," said the Tsar kindly, laying his hand on the kneeling man's shoulder. "tire not your brain in thinking out thanks, I prefer your presence in Petersburg instead of in the Isle of Saghalein. Come, rise, man!"

"Sire," exclaimed Strongoneff wildly, "this pardon to me is worse than punishment, making me feel my treachery too poignantly. I cannot remain in Petersburg without being in your guards, and I have forfeited that honour."

"You labour under a mistake when you say that you must leave the city," said the Tsar briefly. "I command your Excellency to remain, and if not in the capacity of lieutenant, in that of captain. Hush, say not a word, but take a hundred thousand roubles and pay von Virchow before me now, and forsake the dice lest the cursed cubes bring you to a worse plight than now."

He pressed the little roll of paper he had taken from the drawer into Strongoneff's hand, and taking the order burnt it to ashes in the flame of a taper.

In answer to the Tsar's summons, von Virchow was shown in.

"Your Majesty has done me the honour to summon me," he began, bowing and glancing covertly at Strongoneff.

"Precisely," replied Alexander coldly. "You must leave Russia."

"Leave Russia, sire?"

"Precisely. As an ambassador, you would be honoured. As a spy——"

"Sire! You——"

"Silence!" cried Alexander angrily. "Prince Strongoneff has disclosed your infamy, your base endeavours to make him steal Kronstadt's plans as your base offer to square a gambling debt. His Excellency has refused to sell his country's honour, Count, and in proving you a traitor has left me no option but to bid you to withdraw from the Russian Court. Do not deny your guilt, I have proofs." Tearing open a drawer and pulling out some letters the Tsar said: "Here are some of your communications."

Von Virchow paled.

"Prince Strongoneff is not immaculate, sire," said he icily. "He was to have come to the Embassy to-day with the plans. I have a letter of his to that effect."

"I am aware of that, Count," said the Tsar. "And, it was but a diplomatic ruse to deceive you. As I have the said plans here," taking the packet from the drawer, "it is hardly possible that his Excellency could have done what he said—in the letter."

Von Virchow grew crimson.

"I have been duped, sire," he said coldly. "I presume the audience is at an end?"

"Your perception is excellent," said Alexander, "and kindly fix your departure for the earliest possible date, a month at the outside should be sufficient for making all arrangements necessary—ah, stay, Count, Prince Strongoneff desires to liquidate his debt of honour."

Strongoneff gravely counted out the notes with trembling fingers.

"I am a witness to the payment," said Alexander significantly, as the ambassador bowed himself out of the imperial chamber.

"Sire!" cried Strongoneff dropping on one knee and raising Alexander's hand to his lips impulsively, "words can never express my deep gratitude."

"To make a felon is easy," said the Tsar slowly, "but to gain a friend is difficult, and I think that you will stand beside me in danger, instead of conspiring. Is it not so, Excellency?"

"I will stand by you till death!" cried Strongoneff earnestly.

"I believe you, friend Strongoneff. Rise, and go into the street without fear, for none know the part you once, in error, played save Prince Fédor and myself. Those at the Embassy believe you only acted diplomatically, and if it ever comes out, Petersburg will lionise you. In the *interim*, invite Fédor to dinner, he is a man to be cultivated, and your friend. Adieu! your Excellency, and be prepared to take up your captaincy to-morrow."

Tristam K. Monck.

BURTON'S BURGLAR.

BURTON is a man with a taste for science and a fondness for dabbling in mechanics that have proved anything but advantageous to him. It was one of the reasons why on this particular night Burton lay alone in his suburban dwelling and counted the slow hours as they were announced from the clock tower in the parish church.

A fortnight before, it had been decided by the Burtons to spend their Easter in their modern little dwelling; but that was when they were still in possession of Rachel. Rachel's one and only failing was a strong disinclination to turning out of bed, and to rectify this serious drawback Burton had added one more electrical contrivance to the many which his ingenious fancy and deft fingers had applied to his household conveniences.

He took the girl's alarm clock and fitted it to an electric bell, so that promptly on the stroke of six it started ringing, and kept up a most infernal clatter until the girl descended to the lower regions and switched it off.

It was an ingenious contrivance, and Burton showed it to me with a becoming modesty but withal a proper pride and satisfaction. Unfortunately the clock was erratic. The first morning it acted beautifully. After that, it fetched the hapless Rachel down at most unseasonable hours, three o'clock one morning, four-fifty the next, and so on; and at the end of the week, when it started just as she was getting into bed, Rachel came down to the sitting-room in wrath and nothing much else and handed in her resignation.

Mrs. Burton was annoyed about it; but there was no moving Rachel, and in the end the family had to go into the country and spend their holiday with relatives rather than stay at home in the company of dish-cloths and cooking operations.

Burton was busy and had to remain over the night; but he had arranged to catch an early train, and the mere fact of one solitary night at home gave him no concern whatever.

Lying there he fell into a train of reflections concerning his latest invention and its shortcomings, which had deprived him of one of the best servants they had had, when his attention was drawn to a stealthy creak of his bedroom door. In the dead stillness of the night it was unmistakable, and Burton, who was facing it, saw it gradually creeping open. If it hadn't been for that he might, he told me afterwards, have precipitated matters by springing out to investigate.

A draught or the cat would have accounted for it, but there was something fascinating about the stealthy, sly creeping of the inanimate woodwork that held him passive.

It seemed a century, but it might not have been more than a couple of minutes, before a man's head was projected into the room, and the owner thereof took a lengthy and cautious survey of the interior before venturing further.

Burton played 'possum, and the intruder, feeling himself secure, entered noiselessly and took further observation. Burton breathed regularly and somewhat loudly, counterfeiting an occasional half-suppressed snore that filled him with overwhelming pride, despite the unpleasantness, not to say danger, of his position. The burglar seemed satisfied at length of his security, and stole across to the dressing-table on which reposed Burton's watch and chain and one or two other articles of adornment of considerable value.

Now, any ordinary man would have sprung out of bed and grappled with the intruder, or would have sacrificed his valuables as the price of his safety, according to his disposition and the relative value he placed upon himself and his possessions. But Burton's ingenious brain indicated a better plan than either, and by the time the uninvited visitor had reached the dressing-table, Burton's hand had stolen out to the side of the bed where a handy little switch connected with a bell outside the door, which served in ordinary times to call up assistance from below stairs to the passing needs of the lady of the house.

As the burglar picked up the watch the bell rang out—a touch and off again. The man at the table dropped the watch and looked round; but there were no signs of waking from the bed and he tried again. Chuckling to himself Burton played a fugue on the bell, timing the music to the operations of the man at the table.

Every time he touched an article the bell rang; and ceased as soon as he dropped it. Burton heard a whispered and somewhat profane commentary from the bewildered intruder. The man withdrew from the table at length and tried to "go through" Burton's pockets instead. But the result was always the same! everything he touched set the bell ringing, and at last with a smothered oath the man concluded to give it up and content himself with anything portable that might be lying about downstairs.

He withdrew as noiselessly as he had come in; and as soon as he was fairly on the stairs Burton sprang out of bed, drew on his socks and trousers, and possessing himself of his revolver which lay ready for use in a drawer in the dressing table, stole after him.

There was another switch in the dining-room, and Burton told me afterwards that it was a positive treat to see that fellow drop a tea-pot which had set all the bells in the house ringing on being moved, and feel carefully round the plate basket for concealed wires before trying to lift so much as the meanest item of its contents.

Of course he couldn't discover any, because there was none to discover. But as soon as a fork or a spoon was lifted, off went that bell again, and the burglar would slam it down and let loose a perfect torrent of profanity. To vary the proceedings a bit, Burton started off a musical box hidden up in the ceiling somewhere and actuated by another switch. Then he lit up a grinning japanese mask with red and green lights, and having reduced his victim to a state of drivelling repentance, he switched on the light and his revolver and told his visitor that he was pleased to see him.

The man didn't reciprocate; but he successfully concealed his true feelings at the sight of that shining

barrel levelled at his head and smiled a sickly smile. He endeavoured to explain that he must have missed his way in the dark and got into the wrong house, a theory which Burton agreed was not absolutely impossible, though rather wanting in one or two essential details that he, as the writer of successful fiction, would have hesitated about inviting the sagacious readers of his efforts to swallow.

The fellow wasn't without pluck, though he had no mind for scientific devilments—that wasn't exactly the way he put it but it sounds better and will serve—and he didn't hanker after risking a shot. There was a cool precision about Burton that somehow convinced him that that revolver was likely to be well served, and if a man has got to do it at all, he can pick oakum better without a hole in his forearm, and the treadmill is decidedly more congenial when one's legs are not perforated by small cartridges fired at close range. So he faced Burton and asked him bluntly what he intended doing about it.

Burton didn't know and he said so frankly. He put the case to his captive.

"Now supposing you were me," said he tentatively. "What should you do?"

The man's eyebrows went up and he smiled slightly.

"That's rather a delicate question," said he. "You see I've got a considerable interest in the matter and my answer would doubtless be, to a certain extent, prejudiced. Let us suppose, on the contrary that you were me, what should you do?"

"Shy something at you (myself that is) unexpectedly and bolt," said Burton promptly.

"Excellent," said the other with a laugh, tossing to the ground a heavy cushion that he had managed to smuggle behind his back. "That's just what I was going to do. Well, if I were you I'd keep a firm finger on that trigger and pull at the slightest motion, postponing explanations till afterwards."

Burton uncocked the revolver and laid it down on the table before him. "You are original," said he. "I think we can dispense with that if you'll give me your word not to use violence until I begin."

"Quite so," said the other. "I always prefer peaceful methods myself. Would you mind telling me how you connected up every single object in your house to an electric bell."

"Not in the least," said Burton. "I didn't."

"Didn't?" queried the other in blank surprise. "Oh, as you like, of course. I thought we were on the open and mutual confession lay."

"True," Burton admitted. "I had my hand on a switch, and whenever you picked up any of my property I pressed it—that's all."

It was really a weak, almost a criminal thing of Burton to do; but men who live out of the ink-pot are never proof against the chance of good "copy." They would sell their grandmothers for a good short story, and swop the whole of their relations and half their friends for a promising serial. Instead of looking after the interests of society, as he should have done, Burton looked after his burglar. Got him cigars actually, and whisky, and water, and sat up with him half the night!

Of course, Burton was on the war-path! He told his guest so frankly, and produced note-book and pencil as evidence of his stern business purposes. Now I myself. am inclined to think that Burton got his leg pretty severely pulled, and the man simply filled him up according to his capacity for swallowing tough and indigestible incident. "If that was so," Burton said, though he by no means granted it, he was sorry he let the man go. He would have kept him as a "ghost" at a pound a week and made his own fortune out of him.

The conversation happened to turn. not unnaturally. on the stages by which Burton's visitor came to adopt his nefarious profession, and without giving himself entirely away it was made abundantly plain that a reckless expenditure and unlawful means of evading the inevitable result had brought a well-educated man of good position and family to the depths in which he was then floundering.

"I got five years for it," said the man. "and being of a cheerful disposition with a tendency to make the best of everything I wasn't long looking round for a chance to improve my circumstances. Fortune favoured me from the first, for soon after I was transferred to the big convict prison station at Dipmoor, I got a chance of clearing out, and I may say without egotism that I have never been found wanting when an opportunity for bettering myself came along.

"It was due to the chaplain, a solemn-faced, well-meaning old file who was unduly fond of private exhortation, especially if a lag showed signs of grace. He was a much older man than myself, but of about the same size and build, and age doesn't count much in a convict prison. It was speedily borne in upon me that there was an advantage in allowing fleeting signs of grace to become apparent, and I spread them out as alluringly as I knew how. His reverence was hooked as easily as a gudgeon, and hour after hour did he spend with me in the dreary cell which had been allotted to me by a kindly and considerate Government. His long prosing and my enforced inactivity were responsible for the brilliant scheme which, when it first occurred to me, fairly staggered me by its audacity.

"It was no less than to persuade his reverence to change states, and to become convict, while I undertook his clerical labours.

"I pondered on the scheme, and the more I thought of it, the more enticing it became. The chief difficulty was with the chaplain, for I was easily persuaded that some very direct and telling argument would be necessary to get the Rev. Solomon Snipes to consent to such a lop-sided bargain. In fact, it was but too evident that I should have to forgo the consent and carry out the metamorphosis, despite his reverence's not unnatural opposition.

"Would the very daring of the trick suffice to carry me through if I did? That was the question that I tormented myself with. I weighed it up carefully from every point of view for close on a month, and then I decided, firstly, that it would, and, secondly, that if it didn't, the risk it entailed was worth running.

"I often wondered afterwards that the intentness of my gaze did not disconcert my visitor, and lead him to suspect that something besides the hope and expectation of leading a worthy, upright, and honourable existence was in my mind as I listened to his platitudes, the fors and againsts and the whole gamut of his beautifully trite little observations on life and its attendant duties, pleasures, and dangers. I was studying my man with more intentness than I had ever paid to any subject before or have since, for now that I was set on the enterprise I was minded to carry it through in a thoroughly artistic manner. Every trick and mannerism of speech and gesture that I could catch up, I practised persistently in the privacy of my

cell, and in due course it seemed to me that short of going into the pulpit and delivering a sermon, I could pose as the Rev. Solomon Snipes before that worthy gentleman's nearest relative.

"I only hoped that the chaplain would prove as cowardly at the push as my observations had inclined me to believe he would. As the sequel proved, he did, fortunately for me, for had he shown fight my scheme would have petered out in its infancy. The chance came on a Tuesday, shortly after the quarry-gangs had left the prison, and those who were left inside had settled down to their less arduous tasks. All the head officials were out of the way, and the warders were chatting and smoking together, and paying only a cursory attention to their duties. My heart thumped against my ribs when his reverence entered the cell; but it was only momentary, and afterwards I was cool and collected again and set with deadly intentness on my purpose.

"We were in the midst of the troubles of the prodigal son—he was the staple theme of the Rev. Solomon's discourses, and precious sick I got of him, too—when I took occasion to broach the matter I had in mind.

"'You will pardon me, sir,' said I, anticipating the veal, 'but I should be mightily obliged by the loan of your togs.'

"The chaplain stared at me in consternation, so that I was obliged to laugh despite the serious position I was constructing for myself.

"'But my good man,' he stuttered, 'what am I to wear?'

"'Mine,' said I briefly. 'Listen! I am a desperate man and I intend to take desperate measures. I don't wish to hurt you, but I might easily kill you and take what I want afterwards.'

"'You can never carry out such a deception,' said he.

"'I am going to try,' said I. 'Once in your covering and you in mine, and a chaplain's word goes a long way, you know. A wretched convict hasn't much chance of a hearing here.'

"The chaplain winced; but I cut short his hesitation, and lifting the stool I counselled silence and a quick performance of my commands.

"It was ludicrous to see that unfortunate cleric hopping about in his bare legs like a sick fowl; but I was ruthless and had his gear, shirt and shoes, even to the very spectacles off his nose, while he hustled into the coarse canvas I had discarded with a celerity lent by a modest bashfulness that was immensely diverting.

"It was mean of me; but for the life of me I couldn't forbear it, and before I left the cell I crammed that prodigal son down the throat of my victim and gave him such exhortations modelled from his own pattern that he must have been positively churlish had he refused to recognise in me a genius wasted to the world and brought low over a misapplication of a wretched penhandle.

"'Johnstone,' said I to the warder, in the regulation clerical snuffle, as I leisurely walked down the corridor; 'you had better look closely to No. 283. I think his mind is becoming weakened by his troubles. He has been trying to convince me that he is a clergyman or something who has been forcibly made to take the place of a convicted prisoner. The poor man was so incoherent that I could not quite make sense of his complaint. Has he ever told you anything of the sort?'

"'No sir,' said Johnstone grinning maliciously. 'They are up to all sorts of dodges, though. Anyhow, I will see if I can't change his impressions for him.'

"'Be gentle, Johnstone,' said I. 'Remember that the unfortunate and the weak should command all the sympathy that we can give them apart from the just performance of our duties.'

"'He shall have it, sir,' said Johnstone, with another detestable grin.

"'So shall you, my fine fellow, if I get half a chance at you,' thought I to myself. The fellow was one of the most brutal bullies of a class that is exceedingly rich in such specimens, and I owed him quite a large measure in the way of retaliation.

"Things went swimmingly with me, though I was really sorry for poor Solomon. As I had calculated, his story was sat upon at the outset. The only one who listened to it at all patiently was the chaplain, and for obvious reasons *his* attention was of very little service to the unfortunate cleric.

"On the Friday morning following the assumption of my new office, pressing business called me to London, and when I got there business equally pressing compelled me to drop out of the profession I had adopted for my own convenience, and the chaplain of Dipmoor Convict Prison was unaccountably missing.

"One of the convicts there was abnormally anxious to fill the *role*, and he even got his complaint through to the higher authorities, and earned bread-and-water and bad words by the ill-advised persistency with which he addressed his superiors."

"Marvellous," said Burton, after a dramatic pause. "And so you actually did obtain your freedom, and the story never came out?"

"Hardly," said the burglar, with a grim smile. "I never was particularly lucky, and on this occasion fortune served me one of the scurviest tricks that it has ever played upon a man.

"Being naturally reduced in my pecuniary resources, I had to take to the only likely source for improving the state of the exchequer, and for the sake of thirty bob and about five pounds worth of property in a wretched two penny ha'penny clerk's house at Clapham, I was nipped by the leg in a window frame, owing to a broken sash-cord, and held there a prisoner until the morning brought assistance and the sequestered gloom of a cell in the local station.

"This was bad; but worse was to follow.

"At Holloway a 'tec had me identified positively as one of a gang who had burgled a wealthy mansion down in Surrey, and had added murder to their gentle craft, having been disturbed by the butler and given him his *quietus* in endeavouring to still his voice.

"On this charge I was committed to the assizes, and bad enough my position was. To hold my tongue meant hanging—or life at the least, and to save myself was to confess that at the time of the crime I was an extremely orderly and well-conditioned inmate of Dipmoor Convict Prison.

"'Poor devil,' said the counsel who was allowed me by a just and fair-dealing court, regarding me with something like compassion. 'Now, look here! If I tell that story you'll be acquitted with a warm time to follow. Suppress it and you'll in all probability get hanged.'

"I elected in favour of the warm time and I got it—five years and—correction laid on strong. Rough, wasn't it?"

"Very," said Burton, compounding a felony and a glass of something; and then, seeing his visitor safely out into the night, he sat down and wrote feverishly until far into the morning.

R. Andom.

Digitized by Google

THE RED MEN OF THE DUSK

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE.

By JOHN FINNEMORE.

PROLOGUE.

To-day is the Fifth of November, in the year sixteen hundred and sixty, and a rabble of happy, shouting boys, dragging fallen branches across the park towards the village, has reminded me of Guido Fawkes, to whose memory a huge fire is to burn on the green to-night. And it is to be piled the higher since no fire has blazed on this anniversary for years, our pleasant countryside having been in the hands of those who would scarce consider the safety of His Majesty's grandfather a cause for rejoicing. But now that the King has come to his own again, all these customs are receiving more than their wonted observance, and the old village sports are being followed with the keener zest for the rigorous times but lately past. Now, doubtless, His Majesty will find many to inquire into all his adventures in the troubulous times, at last happily over, and eager to write them down for the benefit of posterity. But as for mine, if I do not write them down myself, they are like to go unrecorded. Therefore, having settled my affairs in running order, I am seated on this day of leisure in my own room at Butley Croft, with a fair manuscript book before me, in which I intend to set forth the manner in which I have spent the spring of this year.

By-the-way, my talk of the King puts me upon one caution which ought fairly to be given. I do but speak of him as a loyal subject, and in his Restoration I had neither art nor part. If anyone supposes that he will hear of secrets of State-craft, or fancies that I was privy to the designs of George Monk, and familiar with the plans which were hatched under my Lord Clarendon's peruke, he may as well read no further. My adventures, for the most part, took place among wild and desolate hills, and, being within two days' ride of my native Worcestershire, yet I seemed to travel in time as well as space, for certainly I was carried into the midst of a state of society such as cannot have existed among us for hundreds of years. But if you will, you shall hear.

CHAPTER I.

How I Fared on The Road.

On the morning of the twenty-seventh of February last I rode out of Knighton, on the borders of Salop and Radnor, towards Rhayader, on the further side of Radnorshire. I was not greatly apprehensive of pursuit, for, on leaving Butley Croft, in Worcestershire, I had ridden north-east nearly as far as Shrewsbury, then had turned and ran back almost parallel on my track, making the last part of my journey chiefly by night, and following unfrequented roads.

This I could do pretty easily, for I had a good notion of the general lie of the country. I was now making directly across the borders and heading for the heart of Wales, where I had an expectation of finding a sure refuge. Soon after entering upon a road which I was told would lead me direct to the town of Rhyader, it became very rough and uneven, rising and falling over smaller hills, while far before me, low and purple, rose loftier mountains. I travelled at a moderate pace, for I was desirous of sparing my good mare, Whitesock, she being unaccustomed to such roads underfoot, and her comfort as dear to me as my own.

Near midday, for the sun was hardly at the zenith, I came to a small inn where several roads met. Here I rested a couple of hours, baited my mare, and refreshed myself, though with no great relish, for the bread was dirty and showed signs that the mice had the run of the flour sack, and the rest of the provender was to match.

In the afternoon I entered on a stretch of rolling country, mostly heath and furze, the road, a mere track, splitting into a dozen where there was a bad patch to cross, and every traveller had followed his own judgment.

Up to this point the way had been quite solitary, but on

breasting a gentle rise I saw, some half-mile in front and ascending the next slope, a tiny cavalcade—two women riding on ponies, a led pony, and a man on foot. They were going at a walk and I reined in to a walk also. Perhaps these people would turn aside soon and leave me the road to myself. But, just as they reached the crest of the hill, something frightened the led pony. Making a bound like a cat, the active little creature tore the halter from the hand of the man who was leading it, turned, and came down the hill like a greyhound, the heavy saddle-bags with which it was loaded bumping and flapping against its sides and increasing at once its terror and its speed.

The two women wheeled their ponies and gave instant chase. But the fugitive had less to carry and a good start, and showed them a clean pair of heels. I resolved to stop it as it came up the hill where the ascent would blow it, but in the bottom it turned to the open heath and fled, whinnying with delight, over the turf.

Touching Whitesock with my heel, I rode at an angle with its course, and was soon up with it. But it was no easy thing to catch. It dodged, twisted, doubled like a hare, showed as many tricks as a fox, and, finally, seeing there was no escape, trotted back to the nearer rider as if it had been a tame lamb.

I knew the nature of the little beast well. It was not the first time by many that I had seen the wonderful cunning and cleverness of a Welsh mountain pony, for every spring the dealers come with droves of them to our market town. The nearer horsewoman now gave me a volley of words which proved pure Hebrew to me, showing at the same time her white teeth in a broad smile, which shone all over her freckled face.

It was clearly the Welsh tongue which she was speaking, and as I had no Welsh to answer her, I could but nod and smile back. When she saw that I had not her language she said, "Well, thank you, indeed!" but so oddly and stiffly was it spoken, that I had much pains to recognise the familiar words. I made her a proper reply, then cantered back to the highway.

The second rider had taken a somewhat different direction, and I did not approach her. As I regained the road the man hastened up—a queer, tall, old fellow, clad in well-worn, greasy homespun, and carrying a long carbine over his shoulder.

The sight of this weapon brought to my mind what I had heard about the disturbed condition of this part of the country, and, as I rode slowly up the hill, I drew the chargers from my pistols and reloaded them.

For some two or three miles the way remained solitary, then, at a turn of the road where it wound among thickets of hazel, and bramble, and holly, I was accosted by a young woman standing in the middle of the track. Whitesock was walking, for the going was very bad, and as I came slowly through the slough to the dry spot where the young woman stood, the latter rolled her big, black eyes at me roguishly, and smiled, and kissed her hand.

She was a strapping lass of twenty, maybe, in a bright red petticoat and bodice, the latter leaving her bosom half bare. By her appearance I judged her to be an Egyptian.

"Noble captain," she said, with a caressing smile, "I am a country maid living about five mile beyond here. I have walked a long way, and am weary. Won't you—oh, won't you?—take me up behind you, and carry me a little distance on my road?"

I eyed her warily to be sure that she was a woman, for queer things often befall lonely travellers in these unsettled days. But a woman she was, and one also who thought that her smile and bright eye had pleaded her cause well with me. She took my silence for consent, and advanced to lay her hand on the pommel. Whitesock received a hint, given so that no one might observe it, but which she well understood, and she sprang half-a-dozen feet sideways from the scarlet figure.

"Have a care, my girl," said I, "how you approach my mare! I should not wish to see you suffer either by her teeth or heels."

"She is one of that sort, is she?" said the Egyptian. "Well, noble captain, stay with me and we'll walk gently together, and beguile our way with pleasant speech."

We had now gained the hard road, and I gave another secret sign to my good mare, who broke at once into a hard gallop. I was anxious to be clear of the thicket, for I knew very well she was not alone, and that some plan had gone amiss I was well assured by the foul oaths and outcries which the pretended simple country lass poured after me. I had gone a mile again when a thought flashed into my mind, instantly flashing through my rein, and bringing Whitesock to a stand.

What of the travellers whose pony I had stopped?

What force was with the Egyptian?

To this day I can never understand what power it was that drew my rein and sent me back instantly to see what might hap with them. As I trotted along I mapped out in my mind the country I had recently traversed. It is a gift

Carrying a long carbine over his shoulder.

which is native to me, and which, often and again, has stood me in great stead. It matters not where I go, if it be by daylight, and I can make the lie of the land; it sits in my mind as if pricked out on a chart, I cannot claim any merit in it for it costs me no trouble. It is as natural to me as to breathe or sleep.

As I ran over my course, I saw that the road looped like a bow, and that if I crossed the heath as if marching along the string I should hit the track a little before the thicket where the Egyptian waylaid me.

The heath was dotted with huge clumps of small trees and brushwood, and I took a glance from behind each one which lay in my path to be sure that the country was clear before me.

As I drew nearer to the point for which I was making, I came down from the saddle and led Whitesock, first grasping her nostrils with my hand, holding them shut for an instant, and then caressing her a little. After this, which she understands as well as if she spoke the King's English and I could converse with her, I knew she would not neigh or make the slightest sound.

Creeping thus, I reached a clump of brambles from which I judged the track should be in sight. Nor was I wrong. Peering cautiously through a thin place my eye raked a stretch of road, and there, credit me, was my Egptian dancing a saraband on the crown of the causeway, while three smarthy ruffians lay on the bank. Two were lying idly, the third slapping his leg and snapping his fingers in time to the girl's twinkling feet and flying petticoats.

A moving figure beyond caught my eye and I saw a fourth man come round the bend and run nimbly towards them. My glance was off the group for barely a second but when I looked again the girl was alone. The runner came up, spoke a few words to the Egyptian, then vanished into cover, and the scarlet figure flung itself on the bank where her companion had been lying. Some three or four minutes passed, then the bunch of ponies and travellers came in sight. As they approached, the Egyptian began to groan heartily as one in sore sickness or distress. I held my post and watched, for I did not wish to interfere unless absolute need should arise. Meanwhile the riders came on and the Egyptian groaned.

When they were close upon her the figure upon the bank feigned to be conscious for the first time of their presence. Half raising herself, she held out her arms with an imploring gesture, then fell back. The ponies were stayed opposite, and at a word from one of the riders, the tall man with the carbine gave up the rein of the led pony and went to the Egyptian.

As he came up to her she crouched lower on the ground. He spoke to her and bent over her. With the speed of thought, she turned and flung a slip-noose over his head. The rope, instantly tautened by an accomplice on the other side of the thicket, ran tight about his neck, and with a strangling cry, he pitched forward on his face. I sprang to the saddle, and, sword in hand, drove Whitesock forward at the gallop, for the real cry of distress had been a signal for the four men to spring from their ambush, and the little party was surrounded.

But as I rode forward, I shouted with delight to see what happened. The two women at bay turned on their attackers with all the courage of Amazons. One leapt from her pony and flew to the fallen man, and I saw the shine of a knife in her hands. With one deft blow she severed the choking cord, and, before the Egyptian could turn to escape, and with a single swift turn of the wrist, slashed the decoy hussey clean across her naked bosom.

The Egyptian fled, screaming, the flowing blood darkening her scarlet bodice. The other rider sat her pony steadily, and discharged two pistols at the foe. These were both fired at the two men behind who were the nearer assailants.

The two in front, amazed to find Whitesock sweeping down on them like a thunderbolt, nevertheless dodged nimbly to the one side, and swung their hangers in readiness. Both eyed me as coolly as possible, one on either hand. I saw their intention at once. Whichever drew my stroke, the other would leap in and endeavour to hamstring the mare.

I brought my sword down like lightning.

Now, I had as lieve they should hamstring me as Whitesock, and so I feinted the left-hand rogue, who jumped back, and then brought my sword down like lightning on the right hand fellow as he sprang in. The blade took him fairly across the skull, but his hat was stiffened with some pieces of metal, for I felt that the sword did not bite.

The force of the blow drove him headlong to the ground and his hanger fell harmless.

I drew rein and Whitesock came to a stand within a yard of the ponies. I looked round, but our fight was fought. The footpads had not bargained for this, and they hastened to beat a retreat. Three of them vanished at once, one carrying a couple of slugs in his shoulder from the second pistol, the fourth, whom I had cut down, regaining his senses after a few moments and staggering into the bushes.

At a nearer view, I saw the horsewomen were both girls. That is to say, the one with the bloody knife in her hand certainly was, and the other, though she kept her face closely muffled in the cape of her grey cloak, I judged to be much of the same age. They were clad in thick country homespun, new and warm, and looked like farmers' daughters in their holiday attire.

"We are much indebted to you, sir," said the one who had remained in the saddle in a low, clear, pleasant voice, "and thank you heartily for your help."

"You are very welcome," said I, "though indeed I think you are very capable of defending yourselves."

"We had shot our bok, I fear," she returned, "and Siani's knife would have availed but little against swords."

For myself, I looked upon Siani with interest. She

brought to mind the Welsh women of whom I had read in the histories, the women whose long knives were as dreadful as the swords of the warriors. She was a short, stout girl, squarely planted on her feet, her eye bright with the fire of danger and battle, gripping her knife like a dagger, nor was it unlike a dagger, having a blade six inches long, two fingers broad, and the end slightly curved, and whetted to a very keen edge.

"The Egyptian," said I, "will have to cover her bosom for the future, or be for ever inventing lies of how she came by that scar."

At this moment the bodyguard sat up, and began rubbing his throat. Dismounting, I looked at his neck, and found that the rope had left a purple mark, and, had it not been for that timely stroke of the knife, he would have marched no more in attendance on damsels. His carbine was gone. It had doubtless been carried off by the ambush who had been placed there to tug on the cord.

In a few minutes he was ready to march, and off we moved, for the cover was so thick that had one of them returned with the stolen gun, he might have marked us down at thirty yards with perfect safety to himself. A few minutes brought us to the open, and, a mile further, I perceived that my company was no longer a necessity to them. Houses and farms began to come into sight, and I determined to push forward.

"Do you know the country running north-westwards from Rhayader through the hills?" said I to the girl, who spoke English.

"I do," she replied.

"How lucky," said I, "I wish to travel in that direction. Are the roads good?"

"There are none," said she, "but mountain tracks."

"Could a stranger find his way by them?"

"It would be very difficult. A guide is necessary."

"It is a thing I should be glad to do without," I returned. "I am not anxious to leave any more traces to show which way I have gone than I can help."

She took the hint at once, and inclined her head slightly.

"You are quite safe in our hands," she said.

I now took my leave and rode on.

So far I had kept the path easily from the directions with which the saddler had furnished me, and when I resumed my journey, and had gone nearly two hours march from my halting place, I saw before me, on a ridge against the sky, the first human habitation I had met for many, many miles.

I was now riding up beside a mountain brook, which ran swiftly through the glen, leaping and boiling down a succession of tiny terraces of rock. It was swollen with rain, but the downpour had not been recent, for the first muddy flush had run off, and the torrent was clearly darkly brown.

As I neared the shepherd's cottage the ascent became easier, and wide patches of smooth grass land began to spread out on both sides of the stream. Opposite the house, but on the further bank, I saw a child playing—a boy of perhaps six or seven years old. He saw me at the same moment, and at the sight of a stranger, bolted for the house like a rabbit for its burrow.

The only bridge was a slender trunk thrown across the stream, and half way he slipped and fell. Springing down, I ran to the bank following a well-marked track which I was just crossing, and which led, as I expected, to a ford. Here, the stream ran across a level belt of living rock, without a bubble or swirl.

It was my first experience of such a brook, and I never dreamed of the terrible force hid in that twelve-inch race of flying water. The child was now within half-a-dozen yards of where I stood, and I leapt into the middle of the stream. Of the next few minutes I have the most confused idea. I know that my feet failed to touch the bottom, but at once were swept from under me, and down I went, whirling and floundering to a pool below, to find both myself and

I leapt into the middle of the stream.

the child floating in a back water, and a mountain ash sweeping my face.

As I was now in some three feet of fairly quiet water, and had in some wonderful fashion shot through the whirling eddies between the rocks without a single blow, I swung the little boy on the bank and climbed after him. As I blinked the water out of my eyes, I saw a swiftly running figure bearing down on us, a woman, in short ragged petticoats, and, by the way she hugged and kissed the child, who had escaped as luckily as myself, I judged her to be the mother.

She poured forth to me a flood of language of which I understood no single word, to her great surprise, as she showed plainly when she discovered that I was English. When she saw me wringing the water from my clothes, she pointed to the house and pulled my coat.

We were reduced to signs, as I have read of merchant adventurers among savages, but plain and common wants are easily understood, and I stepped away briskly towards the fire to which she invited me.

Whitesock was standing just where I had left her, and I saw her safe under cover of a shed before I entered the house.

The latter was of the modest and simplest construction, built of rough, unshapen stones, their chinks plastered with mud, and roofed with a thatch of rushes. But inside, at one end of the house was a great turf fire glowing redly on the hearth, the smoke escaping through a hole above.

The shepherd's wife drew a stool to the fire and fairly thrust me down upon it, talking all the while with nervous energy, and patting me every now and then, and pressing my arm as if she could not make enough of me. There seemed no sign of anyone about the house but herself and

the child who had placed himself on the other side of the fire, and, within a moment, the steam began to rise from both of us in clouds.

The woman, bustling about with great activity, placed a small table at my side, loaded it with what she had, a barley loaf, a cheese, a pitcher of milk, and a wooden dish containing a food which I had never seen before, but have since found it to be a very nourishing preparation of oatmeal, called in their tongue *ned*.

With many words of which I knew not one, but also with many striking and expressive gestures which, being the language of nature and the heart, I understood very well, she begged of me to accept the best that she could offer.

I made shift to thank her in the same manner, and fell to without delay, for the mountain air sharpens the appetite. With much natural delicacy she busied herself about other matters while I ate, yet glancing from time to time to see if she could mark any want which she had the means of supplying.

When I had finished my meal I was still loth to start, for I was by no means dry, and the wind would be keen after sitting by this noble fire. My hostess had disappeared carrying a huge pitcher, and, as I suppose, about some household task, when I heard the rattle of hoofs on a stony patch near the house. I looked up, and as I did so a head thrust itself into the patch of sky commanded by the little window. The latter was a mere hole in the wall, unglazed, and closed at night by a wooden shutter, now hanging back.

The head was that of a man of thirty-five to forty years of age, with fiery red hair, moustaches, and beard. His eye was blue-grey, and bright and hard as a falcon's; his nose was slightly hooked, his mouth shut like a spring-trap. But it was more the general expression of his features which impressed me than any special point among them.

His face was purely Roman in its outline. My grandfather, who was curious in such matters, formed at Butley Croft a collection of ancient coins, and often to my delight, he had shown me the contents of his cabinet, and told me the stories connected with them. This fellow's face might have been struck from one of those old Roman medals.

Twelve hundred years and more had passed since that great conquering race had left our island, and yet here was their impress, stamped as strongly and freshly as if this man had marched with sword and shield and pilum under the shadow of the eagle standard. I had ample time to make my observations, for the horseman remained perfectly still, his eye fixed as if watching the far distance.

Then he started forward, and paused again before the open door. He was riding a small pony of the mountain breed, and, dismounting, he tied his reins to a wooden peg fastened in the wall, then entered the house without ceremony. He was a tall, straight fellow, six feet high at least, spare, and sinewy. He advanced directly to the fire and spread his hands to the warmth.

There was but little light in the house, and the flame had died out of the turf, leaving it a reddy glow, so that he could not distinguish me clearly. Seeing someone, he greeted me in the language of the country, and I made a return in English. He turned sharply upon me.

"You are an Englishman?"

"Certainly I am," said I.

He dragged a stool up to the other side of the fire and set himself to examine me. He looked me over from top to toe, and every moment with increasing disfavour. The very hair upon him seemed to bristle with anger, and his eye shone fiercely in the firelight. This was beyond my comprehension, since I had never set eyes upon him before.

"You are not a common man after ponies and sheep?" said he at last; "you are a gentleman. I know it by your fine clothes." To this I had nothing to say, and again his eye worked over my riding suit of blue and silver.

"For what are you coming to this country, and from where do you come, and what is your name?" he demanded.

As I was not accustomed to be examined in this fashion by a fellow in a tattered grey doublet and greasy leathern breeches I made no reply. I did not wish to enter upon any quarrel, for it might be the husband of my kind hostess, and in any case I did not desire a brawl in the house where I had been hospitably received. Some one came in at the door, and I looked round, but it was not the woman, it was the little boy who had been outside to stare at the pony. Now, he came to my side of the hearth, and stood gaping, open-eyed at my companion. The latter took no notice whatever of the child, and was clearly a stranger. Further, he could hardly be a peaceful shepherd, for a heavy broadsword dangled at his belt.

His unreasonable and puzzling wrath was mounting higher and higher; his features worked convulsively, and strange animal noises whistled and groaned through his clenched teeth. Suddenly he gave a most startling yell.

"Oh, the filthy English!" he cried. "Oh, the dirty thieves, the black English!"

Now, I could contain myself no longer, but burst, almost without knowing it, into a hearty shout of laughter. His yell had caused me to start sharply, so piercing and sudden was it, and my disturbed feelings gave themselves vent in the merriment.

My laugh was drowned in the shrill tirade which burst from him—curses, as I should suppose—but not a word could I understand.

The child slipped out of the place with a frightened look. I turned to the fire with a composed face, and the outburst stopped dead in mid career. He had, it is likely, just remembered that his words contained no weight for me. He returned to his old song.

"The dirty English," he said, slowly and bitterly, "they killed a cousin to me."

"Then, sir," said I, "'twas with a rope for a guinea."

A snarl of rage told that I had hit in the clout.

"And dirty thieves," he screamed,

I smiled at his fury. He leapt to his feet. I hitched my sword hilt handy.

"Just now," he cried. "Oh, yes, just soon for that. But, first, first, my handsome English gentleman, look at that."

He strode to the door, which had fallen to, flung it back and stood, drawn to his full height and pointing out.

"There is not a week," he continued in a quieter voice, "since I was going by Hereford and up towards Shrewsbury, and I saw the rich fields and the fine country that my fathers owned once, and I said to myself that the English are the great thieves of the world. I have hated them always for it, and I will never hold back to speak in the face of anyone of them about it. Look here."

He threw out his hand with a stately gesture. I looked, and saw a waste of low, rolling hills, weary in the grey February afternoon, bleached near at hand with the whitening bents, ribs of nalsed rock thrust up through the bare, starved soil, and poverty and famine writ large upon the scene.

"Why," said I, "this is a ripping up of old sores to an extreme. If we are to quarrel about a conflict of our ancestors of a thousand years agone, one never need run short of a bone to pick. The thing was put to the arbitrament of the sword, and there's an end to it. The Saxons beat the Welsh, and then the Normans beat the Saxons. Faith, it's turn and turn about."

"You say that," he cried, his eyes sparkling—"you say that you can beat the Welsh. Here I am, beat me."

"You are giving my words a twist which does not belong to them," said I, thinking the fellow was beside himself, and wishing to be free of him.

"Come," he said. "Here we are, we two. We will play

Digitized by Google

out this old quarrel. Take your sword and follow me to the grass outside."

For answer I turned to the fire. He took up a switch which lay on the floor, where the little boy had dropped it, and advanced towards me.

"I swear," said he solemnly, "that if you do not follow me at once, I will cut you across the face with this little stick where you sit."

She leapt upon my opponent.

I was on my feet at a flash.

"It is well," said he, with an ugly smile. "I am a good judge of a man's eye. I was quite sure I had not much more to do."

CHAPTER II.

A Fight for My Life.

He reached outside and I followed. Since he was so bent upon it, we would exchange a few passes. Certainly, I did not feel inclined to escape on the terms offered.

He threw down his doublet and I stripped off my riding coat. He placed himself in position and flourished his heavy sword about his head as if waving a bulrush.

In height and reach we were fairly matched and, as our swords clashed together, I forgot his mean appearance, and whether he were entitled to the honours of the duello, and only tasted the keen joy of the play, offence and defence, of the two shining points.

I crossed swords with the intention of disarming my opponent as soon as possible, but in a moment my easy confidence vanished. Ragged shirt and leathern breeches, notwithstanding, I had met with a master of fence. At the outset, I tried upon him a pass which had never failed me. He knew the only possible return and played it perfectly, and I barely saved my wrist. My confidence, as I have said, vanished in one minute. In two, I was strictly on the defensive. In three, I was fighting for my life.

"Come," said he, holding me at distance easily, and speaking in a quiet, pleasant tone, "come, now, give me the word that I am the best man, and you shall go without any danger."

For the last dozen passes I had been on the defensive, but, as he dropped back on making this offer, I rushed in on him and attempted to burst through his guard at all hazards. That the trick was a mad one I knew well enough but it was the only one left me.

I sent him back a full yard before he regained his command of the play, and then he set his teeth, and with a wild yell, drove at me in deadly earnest. Once, twice I turned aside the darting steel, but it was as much as I could do to answer those swift, dreadful thrusts.

He was my master, and the best man, sure enough; I knew it now, but to confess it was another matter, and I fought doggedly on, my only object being to stave off the inevitable end as long as possible.

Suddenly a clatter of flying clogs broke out on our left. It was someone running swiftly down the stony road, but I had neither the time nor inclination to turn my head. We had first crossed swords on a level patch a few yards from a bank, the crest of which sloped on upwards, but we had now worked close in, and in another moment my hostess appeared on the rise above us.

Without checking herself, she leapt upon my opponent from above, dropping squarely upon his shoulders, and instantly winding her bare, powerful arms about his neck. Under her weight, and the impetus of her flying leap, striking him as she did like a stone from a catapult, my enemy had no chance at all.

Down he crashed, and the pair of them rolled in a tangle at my feet. For my part, I slapped my sword home, and placed my hands behind me.

Amid a fearful clatter of tongues from both of the fallen he sprang to his feet and scrambled round for the sword which had flown from his hand.

"Come again," he cried, menacing me with his weapon.

"Or perhaps you have had enough?"

"Why, as to that," returned I; "if I had been inclined to take advantage of chances, you would have had much more than enough."

"It is very true," he rejoined, dropping his point; "you could have done me much mischief when I was on the ground. What is on this woman?"

The woman had never ceased to ply her tongue busily, and now something she said drew his fixed attention.

I returned at once to the house, for I was shivering bitterly I was still far from comfortably dry, and the chill wind struck through and through me. I put on my coat and drew my seat still nearer to the glowing turf. In a short time my antagonist and the woman came in.

"Well, well," he cried, spreading out his hands. "Yes, she iss right—the woman iss right; she iss thinking of what you have done for the little boy, and it iss natural that she should have for you a strong and tender feeling. If I had known that before I should never say bad words to you and try for a quarrel—oh! no, never at all."

"Say no more," said I; "all's well that ends well."

My hostess came and patted my shoulder, and I pressed her hand; we could not talk together, but for all that we were at no loss to come to an understanding. She now heaped on fresh fuel—light, woody turf, which caught instantly, and threw up leaping blue flames; and the good pleasant warmth ran through my blood like a cordial.

My antagonist seated himself and fell into a reverie, brooding over his side of the fire. The woman swung over it a huge iron pot half full of water, and began very slowly to pour in oatmeal, stirring all the while, and for a time there was silence. Then he looked up.

"Yes," said he, "the love of the mother for the child. It is the strongest of them all. I have just been trying to remember some verses I have made upon the subject."

So he makes verses, does he, thought I, this unkempt tattered fellow whose sword play is so dreadful, and I eyed him with wonder and curiosity, knowing then but little of the Welsh.

He remained silent for a moment, stroking his beard, and then began to recite. Understanding none of the words, I observed the more exactly the musical flow of his low, mellow voice. His speech was, of a truth, rhythmic. It flowed and flowed as smoothly as a slow river over sand, with barely a trace of the harsh gutturals so prominent in their conversations.

My hostess stirred her porridge slower and slower, then stopped, wooden spoon in hand, and listened, her face set in rapt attention towards the speaker. That his subject was a moving one I judged by his low, pathetic utterance, and the tender pity which shone in the bright, dark eyes of the listening woman. His voice died away softly, and she sighed, and returned to her porridge.

"The verses," said he to me, "are upon the death of a little boy, a child to my sister. She had only the one and was much troubled to lose him, so I made the song to comfort her. Indeed, now, she knows it better than I do. I am saying in it that she would rather hear his voice than the song of the mountain brook after rain, that he loved a little bow and a wooden sword, and to play in the white sand, and how he ran to hide his face against her side from the bwbach. What is bwbach in English?" he asked.

"How can I tell," said I. "You must explain a little."

"Well, perhaps some man shall dress himself in a strange fashion, and black his face, and go about to make a joke, that is it."

"Why," said I "bogey, or some such word as that, we should say in English."

"Ay, ay," he returned, "it is a poor language, the English, I should think, to make poetry in. The words are so stiff."

I laughed, but did not enter upon any argument.

At this moment two or three deep musical twangs, as of a harp rang into and through the house. I turned my head and saw standing in the doorway a figure of a boy.

It came forward and revealed the face and head of a man. It was an elfish-looking dwarf, scarcely four feet high, a ragged, barefooted fellow, holding in his hand a small harp, from which he continued to pluck low, deep notes.

His head was bare, covered only by a mat of dull, red hair which fell over his face, and from among it small, fierce eyes gleamed darkly. He smiled upon my companion and stared hard at me. I heard a loud choking sound at my elbow, and turned to see my hostess with a white face and big frightened eyes looking from one to the other of the last comers. Her bosom rose and swelled as if with dreadful apprehension, when it happened that the swordsman turned and observed her.

He raised his hand and spoke to her eagerly and rapidly in a low, caressing tone. In another instant she regained command of herself and began once more to be busy with the food, but eagerly, and fearfully, her easy, unhasting mood quite departed. The dwarf seated himself, unbidden, his harp resting upon his knee.

"People seem to walk in and out of this place as freely as if it were an inn," said I.

"Oh, yes; why not?" said the tall man, carelessly. "Everywhere on the hills you can sit by the fire, and eat something when you pass a house. It is the custom with us. Now, in England, they would put a dog to tear your clothes and bite you if you walked straight to the fire."

"Oh, no," said I; "the English are not so bad as that."

"It has happened to me, indeed," he replied, "and more than once. Here, everyone passing would come into this house and take a rest or something like that."

As if in proof of his words, the latch clicked again, and the door opened. This time I knew the figure which stood on the threshold, for all that she was muffled high.

"They are coming my road again," I thought.

My hostess slipped down the room swiftly, pressed the grey figure backwards into the thick dust that was gathering, and swung the door to after them. At a sharp word the dwarf flung his harp to the poet, went up the wall like a cat, and vanished through the hole which served as window.

"What's the reason of all this?" said I.

"Indeed, I do not know," said the tall man, gently running his fingers over the harp and drawing out soft, sweet notes. Then he strode into a bold lively air, playing loudly, and singing as he played.

"You have two ideas in this, my friend," thought I. "First to persuade people that you and the harper are both here; the one singing, and the other playing; second, to avoid conversation with me."

A slight scraping on the wall drew my eyes to the window, and in came the red head of the dwarf. His eye flashed with malicious glee full on my companion, and he sprang down into the room and leapt for his stool. He seated himself, seized the harp, and continued the air without the slightest pause. Under cover of the strumming and singing he said a few words to my companion, but I could not catch them, nor should I have been any the wiser if I had.

Without further ceremony, the tall man fetched a bowl from a shelf on the further side of the cottage, took the wooden ladle from the woman's hand, and began to help himself from the pot. She seemed to expostulate as if begging him to wait a little, but he laughed and began to eat rapidly.

His companion at once provided for himself in a similar manner, and the scalding porridge disappeared down their throats at a wonderful rate. In less than ten minutes they had devoured a huge bowlful each, and then they prepared for departure. I rose also, and the bard looked at me with surprise.

"I thought you are stopping here for the night," he said.

"Not at all," said I; "I intend to put up at an inn which I understand lies eight miles ahead, straight along this road."

"But you had better stop here, being so wet."

"I am dry enough now," I returned, "and further, I have a dry cloak which I threw off before entering the water. Which way are you going?"

"Oh, I am going that way," he said.

"Then we will travel together."

"Yes, yes," he said, but with no great heartiness.

Upon signs of my starting with her visitors, the woman had run for Whitesock, and now led her to the door

(To be continued.)

Digitized by Google

DASTARDLY HANDIWORK.

I HAD not seen Professor Dom for months when I entered his laboratory the other day and found him up to his ears in a series of new experiments, the nature of which were a Chinese puzzle to me.

But the courteous old scientist soon became frankly communicative.

"What is this gelatine, you ask?" said he. "A new idea of my own. A new benefit to the human race, especially in the fly season. Those are the germ seeds of human hair. It is an old joke to say that some hair-washes would make hair grow on a billiard-ball. But the jokes of the scoffers of one generation become the scientific realities of the next. I affirm that it is not impossible to make an ivory billiard-ball grow a beard. It can be done."

"But what is the practical utility of your invention?"

"Why, no man and no woman need be bald. My plan is infallible. No hair-wash, no blistering preparation, but the actual sowing within the scalp of the hair seeds which you see there. It is a tickling process, but not painful. Not half so painful as dentistry."

"And those hair seeds?"

"Are all taken from the heads of hirsute and robust people. There is male and female hair, hair of all shades, but carefully assorted. I can grow a crop of any desired colour."

"How do you sow the seed?"

"See this scarifier? This is run over the head of the bald individual, and the seed is then 'creamed' in with a chemical lather of my own. The lather is allowed to dry in till it disappears, and the whole operation is done."

"Have you ever tried it on a man?"

"Not yet. But there is a bald-headed gentleman coming here this morning—in fact, he is here now. He has agreed to let me experiment on his scalp, and he has agreed to pay me handsomely if I am successful, as I certainly shall be. Is that the bell? I will descend to the door and usher him in."

* * * * *

Professor Dom left the room. What unfortunate curiosity impelled me to inspect the gelatines microscopically? I was very careful with them, too, but I ought to have left things alone.

* * * * *

Professor Dom re-entered with a fat, apoplectic, bald man, who perspired profusely and breathed like a locomotive.

"This is Mr. Shinetoft, the gentleman who has agreed to try my experiment. He desires golden hair, and I've no doubt he'll be dreadfully giddy by the time I've done with him. Be seated, Mr. Shinetoft."

The Professor went straight to work. First of all, he washed Shinetoft's head in lukewarm water, then passed the scarifier over the scalp, the apoplectic old gentleman the while venting sighs like the blasts of a foghorn. Next he "creamed" in the seeds with a yel owish lather of a most unpleasing odour; then he placed the bare-headed old gentleman in the sun to dry. The whole operation did not take longer than a quarter of an hour.

"Now we've finished," said the Professor enthusiastically. "As soon as the 'creaming' disappears you can return home, Mr. Shinetoft, and you'll come and see me to-morrow morning."

* * * * *

Next morning a cab drove hurriedly up to the door, then there was a tremendous clatter, and an apoplectic apparition of rage burst violently into the laboratory without removing his hat.

"You hoary-headed, blue-spectacled, swindling old scoundrel!" roared Shinetoft—for it was he—"look at your dastardly handiwork," and Shinetoft removed his hat.

Golden hair, brown hair, black hair, grey hair, carroty hair, white hair, long lady's hair, stiff, beardy hair—all sorts of hair standing spikily on guard and dazzling the vision until the eyes detected green and blue hair amongst the rainbows that lifted their tips angrily outwards.

With a bellow like a wounded mastiff, Shinetoft sprang at me as I lay kicking on the sofa, and pitched me clean out on the gravelled path in the back garden.

When I came back he was gone, and Professor Dom had gone to sleep with his head jammed into a pneumatic trough, while a number of loose detonators were keeping up a fusillade, and threatening to convert the laboratory into a flaming firework display.

"I can't think how the various sorts of hairseeds got so mixed together," said Professor Dom. "I had them all sorted separately."

I might have enlightened him, but I didn't. And the microscope was as mum as I was.

£1,000 FOR YOU!

£25 FOR A NEWSAGENT OR BOOKSTALL CLERK. £5 FOR EACH OF THE BOOKSTALL BOYS. £50 FOR WITNESSES.

TO win this substantial sum of money, all you have to do is to fill up the coupon below, giving in the proper place the number of births and the number of deaths which will occur in the thirty-three great towns in the United Kingdom for the week ending April 22nd, 1899.

Then write down your name and address and ask five of your friends to write their names and addresses in the spaces provided. Any coupon not bearing these names will be disqualified.

Also ask the newsagent or bookstall clerk, from whom you obtain this copy of *S. S.*, to insert his name and address in the space provided. Although such a course is obviously to his advantage, it is not compulsory for the coupon to bear his signature.

Witnesses, newsagents, and bookstall clerks may sign any number of coupons, and competitors may sign each other's as witnesses.

To the person whose attempt is correct we will pay the sum of **£1,000.**

To the newsagent or bookstall clerk whose name appears on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£25**, and **£5** to each of the boys attached to the bookstall from which the paper was bought.

To each of the witnesses whose names appear on the winning coupon we will pay the sum of **£10.**

If no competitor estimates the correct number of births and deaths, the £1,000 will be awarded to the individual whose forecast is most nearly correct.

In the event of two or more persons being correct, the £1,000 will be divided amongst them. This condition applies also to the £25 for the newsagent or bookstall clerk, the £5 for bookstall boys, and the £10 for each of the persons who sign the winning coupons.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

One competitor may send in any number of attempts, but each coupon must be signed by five persons under the conditions mentioned above.

The addresses of the five witnesses must be written in full. If, however, they are all of the same town, it will be sufficient if the sentence, "All of Bradford, or Liverpool, or Glasgow," as the case may be, is written on the margin

It is necessary for each coupon sent in by one competitor to bear five signatures, but the same five people may sign as many coupons as they like. It is not necessary for each competitor to find a fresh set of witnesses for each coupon. Competitors may sign for one another.

There is no objection to rubber stamps being used in place of signatures.

Coupons from Pearson's Weekly, Home Notes, M. A. P., Pastimes, Sunday Reader, Big Budget, and Pick-Me-Up are all available in this competition.

You may keep all the coupons and send them in to reach here by the closing day if you wish.

The coupons belonging to each separate competitor must be inclosed in one envelope or parcel. Two or three competitors may not send in together.

The prize will be awarded to the competitor whose two figures are correct or most nearly correct. For example, if the correct figures are 7,000 and 3,000 respectively, the competitor whose forecasts are 6,999 and 2,999 will take precedence over the competitor whose forecasts are, say, 7,000 and 2,997 respectively.

All correspondence regarding this competition must be addressed to The Editor, *Pearson's Weekly*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and NOT marked BIRTHS. Only envelopes containing coupons should be marked in this way.

It must be clearly understood that all persons who enter for this competition must abide by the decision of the Editor in any question that may arise in connection with the competition.

As a guide to your estimate we give below the number of Births and Deaths which have taken place in the thirty-three largest towns in the United Kingdom for the corresponding period for the past three years.

The figures as published by the Registrar-General will be taken as correct. On December 2nd, 1898, a competition similar to this was declared legal by the Appeal Court.

Registered during the Week Ending April 25th, 1896.		Registered during the Week Ending April 24th, 1897.		Registered during the Week Ending April 23rd, 1898.	
Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.	Births.	Deaths.
6,783	4,062	6,226	3,965	7,202	3,905

All attempts to be addressed to the Editor, Short Stories, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelope to be marked in the left-hand corner with the word: "Births."

THE COMPETITION CLOSES ON MONDAY, APRIL 17th.

S. S.

My estimate is { *Births* ..... / *Deaths* ..... } *Write in large Figures.*

Name .....

Address .....

Signatures of five people:

1. .....

2. .....

3. .....

4. .....

5. .....

*Newsagent or Bookstall Clerk** .....

* If a bookstall clerk, the name of the station will be sufficient.

THIS PRIZE IS IN CONJUNCTION WITH "PEARSON'S WEEKLY," "HOME NOTES," "SUNDAY READER," "PASTIMES," "BIG BUDGET," "PICK-ME-UP," and "M. A. P."

Digitized by Google

The Final Catastrophe.

THE FLIGHT OF A METEOR.

It was a hot night, and the air in the dome of the observatory was stifling. Wearied with long gazing into the immeasurable sun-deeps of the wonderful region of the Milky Way around Sagittarius, I leant back in the observing chair, and fell to meditating on the momentum of the universe.

I recalled the various calculations and demonstrations of Helmholtz, Thompson, Croll, and others. I was thrilled by the thought of the awful power stored up in those crowds of stars at which I had just been looking. I knew that, motionless as they appeared, they were all speeding with tremendous velocity in many directions, and that an astronomer who, a million years hence, should look for these star swarms would either not find them, or would see them scattered over other regions and grouped into new constellations.

Then I thought of the innumerable dark bodies which modern investigations have led us to believe must people space; extinguished suns, or, it may be, hugh primal masses, still spinning with the original impulse imparted by the hand of the Creator, and not yet fired by the heat of impact into sun and world and life-generating nebulæ.

I reflected on the inevitable consequences of a collision occurring between two masses, and the flash of a meteor just then darting past the opening in the dome, and lighting up for an instant the polished tube of the telescope, reminded me how the earth has thousands of collisions every day with minute bodies that it encounters in space, but which, thanks to its airy shield, do no harm to the frail beings that swarm upon its surface.

"There would be a very different story told," I said half aloud, "if the earth should ever happen to run against a chunk of creation as big as itself instead of these insignificant nodules of iron and nickle."

As I thought this I glanced down a deep and singular looking valley at the head of which I was standing. I have never seen anything so splendid in the way of human achievement as that which now met my eyes. The valley being as a narrow gorge, overhung by dark trees, at the foot of the rock under my feet. It sloped steeply and widened rapidly, and half a mile below it came a broad plain, edged by sunlit hills. This plain and the slopes of the hills were covered with a city. Gold, silver, and polished marble in domes, spires, facades, battlements, and lattices without number glittered and glowed in the sunshine.

A man stood at my side, seven feet tall, magnificently formed, dressed most richly in a kind of wine-coloured velvet, with a round cap of the same, ornamented with diamond buttons. He had large round eyes and a curiously inquiring countenance that reminded me of a picture I had seen of Diogenes with his lantern.

"It's the city of the Great Ellipse," he said. "This the sunshine of Alderbaran. You notice how rich is its tone, not really red, yet almost a rose tint. You don't get that kind of light from your sun."

"No," I replied, with an indescribable feeling of being obliged to make a humiliating confession. "In the pale white beams of our sun that great dome yonder plated with gold merely appears dazzling and gaudy, but look at it here!"

The play of light on it was wonderful; manifestly a golden reflection, yet strange beyond description.

"Are you not surprised to see gold here?" my companion asked.

"Not at all," I said. "The spectroscope satisfied us long ago that we should meet with familiar substances throughout the universe."

We began to go down into the city. Every step was a revelation of fresh magnificence. The streets and buildings and the dress of the inhabitants in the smallest details were entirely worthy of the splendour of the city as it had appeared from a distance.

The spoils of all the empires of the earth would not have furnished out the decorations of this wonderful town. And enveloping and beautifying everything was the rich light of Alderbaran, which produced the extraordinary impression of being streaked with rose tints, as if the whole atmosphere were filled with etherealised apple blossoms.

I noticed that the inhabitants, who smiled and bowed at us on all hands, took a constant delight in this sunshine, and their eyes opened wide in it like the nostrils of one who catches a faint perfume.

"The precious metals must be exceedingly common in your hills," I remarked.

"No," was the reply, "we have to go far and mine deep for them."

"And sometimes fight for them," I suggested.

"No," answered my companion with a smile. "We have no war. The whole planet is occupied by a single race, constituting one nation. Our only rivalries are in the study of nature and the enrichment of our surroundings. Our chief intellectual pleasure is in the development of the sciences. Our ruler is our greatest mathematician. Upon his death another is elected. the sole qualification being that he shall have excelled all other men in mathematical achievement. Our present ruler has immortalized his name by inventing a perfectly general solution of the Problem of Three Bodies. Oh, it is beautiful! In a hundred days I could give you an inkling of it."

Digitized by Google

"I wonder if Newton, and Laplace, and Lagrange will soon find this planet?" I said to myself. "I wish they could."

My companion continued: "This is called the City of the Ellipse, because many thousands of years ago, when our race was just emerging from barbarism, a mathematical genius, whose name is now inscribed on every temple of science on the planet, discovered the properties of that wonderful figure, and its relation to the motions of celestial bodies. With hewn stones, a marvellous work for his time, he constructed on the summit of the hill yonder an ellipse whose major axis is half a mile in length.

"The great figure has been carefully preserved to this day, and the stones composing it have been plated thick with gold. All the space within the curve is paved with lapislazuli, and each focus is marked with an immense diamond. The huge white marble building that you see stands at the intersection of the transverse and conjugate axis, and contains the college of the Mathematics."

We visited the college. In one of the rooms a microscope was shown to me, and I was informed that with it the ultimate atoms of matter could be seen.

I looked at them, and was wonder-struck by their maze of ceaseless motion.

At night they directed me to place my eye to a great telescope that was pointed upon a faint star, and I instantly recognised our own solar system.

Jupiter with his belts, Saturn with his rings were familiar to my eyes.

I saw the earth attended by the moon, oh, so far off; the sense of their remoteness was oppressive, and yet I could not mistake them.

They changed the eye-piece, and then I saw the bare object glass of my own telescope glimmering dimly in the starlight through the narrow opening in the observatory dome where I had left it pointed at the sky. A curious passage in that remarkable little book, "The Stars and the Earth" occurred to me:

> The rays of sight diverge from the eye so that a very small body close to it fills up the interval between two such rays, while at a greater distance a much larger body is necessary to fill up the proportionately increased space between them. If we hold up a shilling at arm's length before our eyes we may completely conceal the sun with it.
>
> If, on the contrary, an organ of vision was constructed in such a manner that the rays proceeded in parallel lines, every object would appear in proportion to every other, and of its own proper size without reference to the distance between it and the eye.
>
> We certainly should not see distant bodies entire, but only such small portions of them as are proportionate to the size of the organ of vision constructed after this fashion; but this little portion would be visible with equal clearness at every distance, and a blade of grass upon the most distant star could not escape our sight, provided the atmosphere was clear.

Yet I could by no means understand how a similar effect had been produced with this telescope, and I felt instinctively that it would be hopeless to inquire.

"In all our researches amid the universe of worlds," said my companion, as we were walking again in the town, "we have never been able to find any indication that there exists a mortal race equal to our own in science. We have traced with absolute certainty the history of the evolution of the planetary system of which our splendid sun is the centre. We have calculated, according to the laws of probability, that the chance of our being destroyed by a collision between Alderbaran and one of the dark bodies of space is almost infinitesimally small, and yet we know with mathematical certainty that that chance exists, and in some mysterious way that knowledge has produced a most profound spiritual impression upon the race.

"Have you not noticed a certain underlying sadness in us all? It is the shadow of the Last Catastrophe that lies upon our souls, do what we will to banish it. I sometimes think there is a fate in it that defies the laws of chance. Do you see that symbol, a licking flame, shaped in gold, surmounting the dome of the great College? Well, look about you; it is everywhere reproduced in the ornaments of windows and doors and columns. The very children," he cried with sudden excitement, clasping his hands, "make figures of the Destroying Flame in their play!"

I shuddered when my attention was thus called to the universal presence of this awful symbol. It stared at me now from a thousand places where I had not recognised it before. The ruddy sunshine, which had before seemed so productive of unspeakable beauty, now appeared to me fierce and ominous. The omnipresent symbol quickly became a torment to my nerves. I could not escape it, with its polished gold tongues flashing blood-red reflections, and I could not endure it. Oh! to get away from this doomed world!

I turned in a fever of terror to ask my companion what I should do. But, with a sudden exclamation of "The Signal!" he had vanished from my side. We had been walking in a broad street that led up the hill to the Ellipse, and presently I saw him running at the top towards the College. With trembling knees I struggled up the ascent. The weight of Fate seemed bearing me down. I hated the gorgeous town, and trembled at the sight of it. Alderbaran followed me with hot and malevolent beams.

When I had stumbled to the brow of the hill I saw my friend's face in the door of the marble college. It was as white as paper, and his great eyes stared out of it like two circles of charcoal. He beckoned to me, and with a desperate bound I was at his side and sheltered in the shadow of the doorway.

"It is coming!" he gasped. "Look here," and he pulled me into a room where several very grave-looking gray-haired men were leaning over a table on which was spread a large sheet of paper filled with mathematical diagrams. They looked up as we entered and, parting, made room for us beside the table.

"Let the stranger look," said one of the old men. He pointed to a diagram representing the orbit of a planet, and surrrounded with figures which I perceived must be geometrical representations of calculations involving the perturbing influence of a number of attracting bodies.

"Our refined method of analysis," said the aged mathematician, "enabled us to calculate with the utmost accuracy the motions of all bodies constituting our planetary system. We can tell about the absolute place of any one of those bodies within the thousandth part of a second arc. For many centuries the utmost acute observer has been unable to detect the slightest variation from our tables. Quite recently, however, startling evidences of variation have manifested themselves. Our own planet was found to be the twentieth part of a second in advance of its calculated place in its orbit. It was conclusively proved that the tables could not be in error, and further observations demonstrated that the disturbing force which had introduced these beginnings of disorder in the system was becoming greater.

"No doubt now remained that some body of great mass was approaching out of the abyss of space. It was easy to find its position in the sky which is shown upon

Digitized by Google

this diagram. But its mass, distance, velocity, and direction of motion was not so easily ascertained.

"We closely approximated to them, but anxiously awaited the moment when the body should have approached sufficiently near to become visible by the reflected light of our sun in order to make the observations needed to give us more exact information.

"A signal was arranged to be displayed from the college as soon as the discovery should be made. That event occurred a little before daybreak this morning, and the preconcerted signal has brought all the most celebrated mathematicians and astronomers here in hot haste as fast as it has caught their eyes."

"But the most startling thing," broke in my friend, "is that the single hour during which the body was seen this morning sufficed to show that it is moving towards Aldebaran, and with frightful velocity. The Catastrophe is upon us."

Events now shaped themselves rapidly amid a whirl of excitement. When the truth was known the city roared like a stricken beast.

Choked with ever-increasing multitudes, its long glittering streets flung upon the flanks of the hills were in ceaseless motion, like the arms of some wounded monster vainly striving to crawl away. Blazing under the red orb of day, glimmering in the starlight, I saw days and nights pass over the doomed town as swiftly as the checkers of sunshine and shadow fly over a meadow.

Later observations brought out a most startling fact, which the astronomers had at first overlooked. The gigantic meteor was moving straight towards Aldebaran but the planet we were on was swinging in its orbit with a velocity, and in a direction, which would certainly place it exactly in the path of that Juggernaut of space. It would run down the planet before it met the sun and involve the whole system in a common ruin.

Its weight, the mathematicians ascertained, was an octillion of tons, 500,000 times as heavy as the doomed planet. Its velocity, owing to some enormous initial impulse, would be nearly 400 miles in a second at the instant that it struck us. I undertook to calculate for myself the amount and intensity of the heat that would be developed by the shock, but sick at heart, I dropped my pencil. It was enough to know that we should all vanish in a whiff of smoke. It would be the torment of hell, but only for a second.

In the meantime the astronomers coolly studied the approaching body with their telescopes. I myself felt the liveliest curiosity concerning this mysterious, nonluminous, monstrous mass which, it was perfectly certain, from the velocity with which it moved, possessed an impulse that could never have been derived from the ordinary effects of gravitation. Here, perhaps, was one of those primal bodies, about which we had speculated on the earth, containing locked up in its simple energy of motion all the potencies of solar and planetary development.

Who could guess how many millions of years it had been flying on its unerring course, seeking some gigantic mate that by their fiery union its imprisoned forces might be set free? And now, at last, its supreme crisis was at hand, and the birth of this new star was to involve the destruction of a system of worlds and the extinguishment of a whole race of intellectual beings.

For a day or two before the end it was evident that our planet had been dragged completely out of its orbit by the tremendous attractions of the meteor, and was rapidly plunging towards the latter as if hastening to meet its doom. Gradually the vast hulk, which glowed in the midnight sky with a lurid reflection of the light of Aldebaran, producing a ghastly illumination of the landscape, began to manifest in its appearance the effects of its approach to a solar centre.

Phenomena resembling those displayed by a comet on nearing the sun were exhibited, but on a prodigious scale. We could see that a monstrous tail streamed out into space behind the body, but as it extended nearly straight away from us, it was barely visible through foreshortening.

The meteor, though still forty or fifty million miles distant, covered a space on the sky many times larger than the full moon, and a more frightful object the imagination could not conceive. Its colour was fiery red, and its light blotted out the stars. It was surrounded by great flames and fiery streamers that were blown back on all sides as if by a mighty wind. The planet, though torn from its orbit, still continued to rotate upon its axis, and so the awful spectre rose and set opposite to the sun, and every succeeding night the immense increase in its apparent size demonstrated the fearful rapidity of its approach. It expanded from hour to hour before the eyes of the horrified spectators. It seemed to swallow up the heavens.

When half a million miles away it filled the whole sky, blood-red, smoking, blazing with the fury of electricity and caloric. We knew we had but twenty minutes more. I cotld feel the great frame of the planet tremble as it madly leaped to the embrace. The heat was insufferable The fearful attraction was sucking the atmosphere away and we gasped for breath. Lightning fell in sheets and streams. Gigantic whirlwinds arose, and great areas of the marble and golden city were swept up and scattered like leaves on the bosom of the storm.

But, oh, the noise! The roar and howl and shriek of the tormented elements.

It split my very brain, and yet above or through it all I could hear the wail of a million tongues, the last despairing, awful cry of a whole race perishing at one stroke.

While I stood stupefied, there came a universal crash as if the dome of the firmament had fallen, and instantly there burst, withering through the air, a blast of heat before which the smoking hills melted like snow, and whirled into blazing clouds of mineral vapour.

Seared with torture I was caught up like a cinder in a whirlwind of fire and then the mouth of Hades seemed opening under me.

Down I dropped through the spot where the city had stood, through the smoke of the vanished planet, and instantly emerging beheld afar off, the earth beaming in the quiet starlight.

"I shall fall home," I thought, but glancing back I saw the mighty meteor, aflame with its fearful spoil, thundering after me.

In a second it was upon me again.

"Help! Help! Oh, Heaven!" I shrieked, and all consciousness left me.

I opened my eyes as a little breeze breathed through the dome, and I saw the Milk Dipper glowing softly in the radiance of the galaxy.

"Bless my soul," I exclaimed, rousing myself. "If I fall to dreaming like this, I shall have to give up astronomy." George C. Wallis.

Digitized by Google

FROM BACKWOODS AND PRAIRIE.

I.—THE MAN HUNT.

We were all glad in the stage-coach when two passengers got out at Sarron. The coach had been carrying three men on a seat, and for the last eight miles the two San Ramon passengers had been sitting in the laps of the others, turn and turn about.

It had seemed to me that my turn with the stout man had been unfairly protracted, and with him on my knees I had begun to understand something of the discomfort of a cattle-truck. I was particularly unhappy when the big wheel on my side jumped into a rut or banged against a stone.

My fellow man and brother is all very well at his proper distance, and I can venerate him there, but when he crowds me he is only a bag of live meat.

The wild mountain-side with its brave army of straight pines meant something for me when the burden was off, and as I straightened out my stiffened legs, the loud-talking stream that ran along our dusty way spoke up to some purpose. I was alive again.

The driver seemed jollier, too. He plucked from the sides of trees letters that had been visible only to his eyes, letters stuck to twigs or bark by the rustics, and he joked about this youth's tender missive to that maiden, and so on, for he knew all the people up there in the mountains, and all their affairs and affections.

We made a wild dash down a red hill, whose sides were gashed by the road, and spattered the water in the shallow brook at the bottom. Then we were submerged in the gloom of a grove of thick growing redwoods that made a high-vaulted roof for the road and shut out all but the merest streaks of sunlight. It was chilly in there and sinister—just a bit ghostly and gruesome, too—and there was an odour of rotting leaves.

We made a sharp turn round a big black stump, and the lead horses jumped in fright to the left. For there was a spectral figure standing in the deepest shadow behind the stump—the slight, bent form of an old woman.

"Ah, Mrs. Chapman! Going to take a trip?" asked the driver, pulling up.

"Yes," shrilled out the high, thin voice of the apparition. "Going down to Covelo."

"Get in, then. Plenty of room, ain't there, boys?" And he laughed as if the joke were against us, which it was.

She seemed a bit dismayed as she looked inside from the step, to which one of the outside men had helped her.

"Seems rather crowded," she said, "but I can squeeze in somewhere."

Surely enough, her lean figure fitted into a little corner, and she sat there as composed as she might have sat in her own chair. She was dressed in deepest black, and wore an ancient black bonnet. Her face was one of extreme sadness.

I looked out of the coach window as we started again and saw the house where she lived. It was a black little affair, with its crumbling roof and weather-stained sides. It stood out of plumb, as if bowing to the big black stump. The poor habitation looked as if it had never known morning or noon, but always the twilight of the redwood deeps, to which the darkness of night is merely one of degree.

"Lived there long?" asked the passenger who had made most interrogations along the way. Though curious, he was a sympathetic man, and with the question went a tone of pity.

"Yes, eleven years; alone most of the time, too. It's a good cool place in hot weather."

The woman did not even seem to like to talk, but shrank into herself and kept her sharp, pale face turned aside, while her eyes went low. I knew a story belonged to that face.

Two miles were soon rattled off, and we came to Covelo and sunshine, for we were well out of the redwoods. The old woman was helped down, and three other passengers got out. A big farmer shook hands with the woman when she alighted, and said something to her that brought over her face what was possibly meant for a smile. Then the farmer clumped into the stage in a large, lumbering way, and we rattled out of Covelo.

Digitized by Google

The new-comer seemed to know nearly all the people in the coach.

"So you picked up Mrs. Chapman coming down? She's a good old soul, isn't she? But she has a strange history."

"What's her story?" I asked. "I know it must be as good as Maupassant."

"Don't know the gentleman, but it's a good one, right enough," said the big passenger, who seemed to be a man of parts, though he smoked a very bad cigar.

"She came to the woods before they had a sign of anything at Covelo or San Ramon either. I expect it was long before any of you thought about coming here. She's a remarkable woman, gentlemen, and no mistake.

"You see, she and her husband came to this district and took up a timber claim about a dozen years ago. The husband died, but she had a boy left, a young man about twenty, I should say. She thought the world and all of that boy. He was a bit rough, like many others then.

"Lloyd Chapman could handle an axe with the best man in the woods, and he was liked by everybody. His mother was very proud of him. Young as he was, though, he had that old-man look that comes so early to wood-choppers.

"There came a time when I had to do some prevaricating on Lloyd's account. You see, he began running down to the town and over to Pike's place, to have a spree, and he'd do this nearly every week. So, when Mrs. Chapman would ask me, with a worn, sitting-up-late look on her face, if I'd seen Lloyd, I'd always tell her something to ease her mind, saying he'd got an extra job of woodhauling up some other district, or something of that sort.

"She didn't know the boy drank, and he had sense enough not to come home until he was sober. But it hurt me to see him going on that way. And so, one day, I just stopped him where I met him on the road and talked to him like a Dutch Uncle.

"'You've got to stop it at once, young man,' I said. 'You'll wind up by breaking your old mother's heart if you don't. Besides, I'm not going to shield you for always.'

"I think I can be eloquent when there's any great occasion for it; and I felt this to be the real occasion. So I was uncommonly eloquent. My words reached him.

"'Well, I'll leave off,' said he, striking his side with that big hand of his. 'I'll swear off from this minute.'

"'That's good,' I said, and drove on, with my pride in my eloquence swelling up like water in an artesian well.

"Not very long after that, Lloyd went over Orimbo way, where he got a job at the big lime kilns. They were all fine fellows over at the kilns—all except one, Joe Kendrick. He was just about Lloyd's age and looked like Lloyd a good deal—same colour of hair and eyes, and just about Lloyd's build. The two young fellows got quite chummy, went to live in the same cabin, and were always seen together about the kilns.

"Just about that time a girl came into the camp—the foreman's daughter—Jess Raymond. They say Jess was an exceedingly pretty girl, and had eyes that were quite fascinating.

"Lloyd and Joe fell so deep in love with her that neither of them knew which end he was standing on half the time. She seemed to favour Lloyd more than anybody else at the camp, but Joe was in the race and meant to win. Joe thought he was the favourite, so he pulled himself together and asked her to marry him. Jess was very sorry, but she was promised to Lloyd.

"That was enough. Joe was wild. He left the cabin wouldn't speak to Lloyd again, and went about with a black look for everybody. He drank very heavily, too, and talked a good deal about shooting. I happened to be at the camp just then and before I went home I told Lloyd to keep his eyes open and his pistol handy. But it was like talking to the wind. He wasn't afraid of anybody.

"'It would be a good time to take a run down to the redwoods and see your mother,' I said. 'She must be very lonely there. She hasn't seen you for more than a month, you know, and you used to be home nearly all the time.'

"'Oh, you want me to run away from Joe, don't you? I'm no turn-tail,' said he with fine contempt.

"It was no use. I couldn't make him see, what all the camp saw, that his life wasn't worth a straw with that half-mad Kendrick oiling up his pistol and shooting at all kinds of targets down by the creek.

"I went home past Mrs. Chapman's, and she asked a good many questions about her son. She had heard very little from him since he had taken up with Jess Raymond, and she was getting anxious. She made me stay there an hour or so, telling all about Lloyd and whether the work was too hard for him, and whether he got enough to eat. She said she'd heard that lime burning was bad for the eyes, and she wanted to know if his had been affected. She showed me a wonderful red jacket that she had knitted for him. She had been at work on it for weeks, and it was nearly finished. I never knew a mother with so much feeling for a son, and now that he had left off drinking and was behaving himself decently, I felt that he was really worthy of it.

"She grew so lonely there in the woods that she came near setting out to stay a-while at the camp, where she could be near her son, but she said it was rather hard for her to get about, so she waited. He had promised to come home about Christmas time. It seemed he was waiting to see her before he told her anything about that girl of his—probably thought telling her now by letter would make the poor old soul more lonely than ever. I believe he thought, too, that she would be a bit jealous.

"And so it went on to the night of the gale. It was a night that everybody round here remembers, for the country had a good sweeping that time. It was a dismal night for the old woman, you may believe. She didn't go to bed, but sat up all night and heard the howling of the blasts as they tossed the grey tops of the trees together, and down went a tree here and there with a crash. The wind always made her fidgety, and now her nerves were sadly strained.

"Well, in the midst of a lull she heard a clatter of hoofs, and a young man rode up wild and hot, and begged her to hide him, for the officers were on his track. He had no hat or coat, and his shirt was nearly cut off him by falling branches. He had been drinking a little up at town, he said, and had got into a shooting scrape. The best man in the camp at handling a pistol had set upon him, and it was one life or another.

"The old woman listened to him, and, seeing how like he was to her own son, and overlooking his carouse, as she had often done Lloyd's, she argued to herself that it was all right, and that it was lucky her own boy had never got into such a scrape. Had he done so, she would have thanked the one who had saved him. Besides, it was a matter of self-defence.

"She hurried the young man into a very small attic, the entrance to which was over the kitchen. Then she gave his horse a cut with a switch, and he ran down the road, leaping a fallen tree here and there, but making headway at a good gait.

Digitized by Google

"Turning, she saw four horsemen dash up, with hard breathing beasts under them. They were the officers from Orimbo. None of them knew her. They asked her if she had seen a young man go by there.

"Perhaps it was her side look when she told them 'no' that made them search so carefully about the place. They had ridden so hard that their horses needed a rest, so they waited there a while and continued their search about the house and the little outbuildings by the light of a lantern they had borrowed from her. By this time the wind had gone down and the woman had come to herself, for what with the gale and the man-hunt she had been greatly upset.

"'You'll not find him in the chicken-house, nor in the wood-shed, nor in the well!' she fired up at them. 'I tell you nobody has stopped here to-night. You're only losing time, for, now I think of it, when the wind was highest I heard something that sounded like horse-shoes running down the road.'

"Then she sat down limply on the back step, for the brave speech had cost her breath and nerve.

"So, after taking another look through the house and darting a glance up the little attic hole from which she had taken the ladder while they were outside, they at last mounted their horses and dug in their spurs to such a purpose that they soon overtook the horse, which had settled down to a quiet walk.

"They were in the open country and the moon was up. There were no fresh tracks, though the ground was soft and they could have seen them by sharp searching. As one stirrup was flung over the saddle they saw that the horse had come some distance with no rider.

"It was getting towards daybreak now, and two of the men came back and camped at a little spring in front of the house, where they took another rest. The old woman saw them from between her shutters, but she did not go out, for her man was still in the attic. He had not dared to come down, as he had been expecting another part of the *posse* to pass by. Surely enough, the party did pass just about sunrise, hailing the men at the spring with: 'Ain't givin it up yet, have you?' to which the reply was: 'Oh he's off in the redwoods somewhere. He isn't fool enough to trot along a stage road in broad daylight.'

"The men at the spring hung round for three or four hours. They didn't go near the house, but just stayed where they were, guarding the road and waiting for the others to come back.

"Meanwhile the old woman got breakfast, and passed some ham and eggs, some bread, and a good strong cup of coffee up to her lodger in the attic.

"At last the whole troop of man hunters came back, and they all rode off to a track a mile back which they thought the murderer might have taken.

"Rather than risk another search the woman told the man in the attic that he had better get out now and make up the old back track for the hills. So down he came shaking in fright, and looking round as cautiously as a wood-rat.

"It was a chilly morning after the storm, and he looked cold and pinched. So she out with the very jacket she had knit for her boy, and handed it to him.

"'The left sleeve ain't quite done,' she said, 'but the jacket's good and warm.'

"He pulled it on, and, with a mumble of thanks—he had hardly spoken to her since his first coming—sneaked out at the back door, and up through the woods towards the hills.

"Men that she knew came along with axes and saws and cleared the coach road. They seemed to fight shy of the cottage, but one, a warm-hearted Irishman, made bold to come in and offer her his sympathy in 'the hoor o' yer distress.' She looked at him with a woods-woman's intuition of evil. What had happened? She shrank in terror from his words, but she would have them.

"Then he told her, with well-meant but crude and heart-stabbing speech, that her son Lloyd had been slain by a man named Joe Kendrick, and kept up a running river of words of pity and consolation.

"She did not sink upon the floor, nor fall into her chair, nor cry, nor moan; but she ran to the the fireplace and took down down a repeating rifle that hung there, and ran like a girl of fifteen up the track towards the hills.

"All the morning she followed that track, tracking the man like a hound. All the afternoon she kept on over the hills and among the great rocks where she knew the slayer of her son was hiding.

"At last spent by her unwonted effort, her old limbs quivering under her, and her back aching cruelly, she sat down on a rock. She was faint from want of food, and her throat seemed as dry as the coarse, wrinkled skin of the back of her hand. For a little while she closed her eyes and bent her head on her arm that lay on the sharp granite.

"The torturing vision was plain before her, even with shut eyes, her boy lying dead with a bullet hole in his back.

"The shadow of the rock crept gently over her and shielded her grey thin-haired head from the sun. A brown lizard looked at her with an eye that held something of pity. She of the redwood deeps, unused to the scorching heat, drooped there on the dry hill like a withered flower.

"A little breeze came down and rustled a bush at her side. She opened her eyes, and below her, beside a rock, not more than fifty yards away, was a red something. She stared hard, her poor eyes strained and unwinking. The blotch of red was the jacket she had knitted for her son. She could tell that shade among a score. And that red jacket clothed the breast of her son's murderer.

"She breathed a soundless laugh, her face lighting with joy. But when she lifted her rifle her arm shook so that its loose stock rattled in her hand. She crouched in the shadow behind a lower surface of the rock, and the rifle stole cautiously into place, resting there firmly.

"She shut one eye and glanced along the barrel. Her arm hugged the rock lovingly. Thrice the head went by the peep hole, and she felt that her hard breathing was marring the sight. So she held her breath, and soon the head was fairly in front, with just a little rim of red above it. Her finger that had been fondling the trigger all the while now pressed it quickly.

"There was a crack, and a smoke-puff passed away on the breeze. She looked eagerly at the man in the red jacket, but he sat there, leaning against the rock. So she quickly threw out the empty shell, drew her head, and fired again. Still the man in the red shirt sat there, his face staring up at her and mocking her. As carefully and deliberately as before she fired another shot. Yet there was no movement of the red jacket.

"She put a withered hand to her brow and pressed it hard. Then she rose and stole cautiously down the rocks and through the chaparral, carefully watching the figure before her. When she came down to it she saw that the head was tilted back a little so that it rested on the rocks. The eyes were wide open.

"In the breast of the red jacket were three bullet holes.

"That's all, gentlemen, and here we are at the end of the journey."

Robert Anson.

Digitized by Google

THE
ELECTROPATHIC BELT
Has Cured Thousands—
WHY NOT YOU?
Testimonials Absolutely convincing,
AUTHENTIC.
Investigate—Write for Information—
Advice personally or by letter,
FREE.
MEDICAL BATTERY Co., Ltd.,
489, OXFORD ST., LONDON, W.

100 PACKETS showy Flower Seeds, 1/6; unequalled anywhere.
DANIEL STONE, LOUDWATER, BUCKS.

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.
DEVONSHIRE CREAM.
(Really Genuine.) In Patent Air-tight Tins. ¼lb., 10d.; ½lb., 1/4; 1lb., 2/4; including Tin and Postage.
MRS. CONYERS, MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

NOSE MACHINES. Worn by Doctors. Ugly Noses re-formed in a few weeks. Particulars for stamp. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Pamphlet "Cause and Prevention," 1/-. Blackhead Cure, 2/9. Greasy Skin, 1/9. LEES RAY, Specialist, X Dept., South Castle Street, Liverpool.

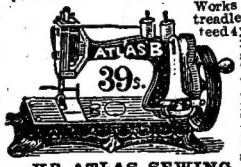
A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 92a Aldersgate Street, London.

VARICOCELE.
Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, or Varicose Veins, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free.
S. S. MURRAY,
7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

SILVER QUEEN CYCLES.

ON MONTHLY PAYMENTS.
Immense stock Ladies and Gents'. New and Second-hand. Wonderful bargains. Carriage paid. Easy payments from 10s. monthly, or large cash discount. 1 year's guarantee. *Illustrated Price Lists post free on application.* Old cycles exchanged.—THE SILVER QUEEN CYCLE Co. Ltd., 221 Tottenham Court Road, London.

TOOTH-ACHE
CURED INSTANTLY BY
BUNTER'S NERVINE
Prevents Decay, Saves Extraction, Sleepless Nights Prevented.
Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerve Pains removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d.

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.


Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine 39/-
To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work.
THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO.,
188B High St., Camden Town, London, N.W.;
63 Seven Sisters Rd., N.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.
Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Rivetted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 23 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

ORGANS. GENUINE AMERICAN.
Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers. 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.

THE LONDON AND LIVERPOOL PIANOFORTE CO.,
Granby St. & Selborne St., LIVERPOOL.
Agents wanted where not represented.

SAVE HALF YOUR BUTCHERS' BILLS and BUY from our DIRECT SUPPLY STORES. Orders of 4s. free delivered. Terms, cash on delivery. Orders posted before five p.m. delivered next day everywhere.
MUTTON.—Loins and saddles, 6½d.; shoulders, 6d.
MUTTON.—Legs, 8d.; necks, 5d.
LAMB.—Hind-quarter (9lb.), 8d.; fore-quarter (9lb.), 6½d.
BEEF.—Topside, 7d.; silverside, 7d.; sirloin and ribs, 8½d.
BEEF.—Suet, d.; gravy beef, 4d.; brisket, 4½d.
BEEF.—Rump steak, 11d.; beefsteak, 8d.; salt silverside, 7d.
VEAL and PORK equally low prices.
The ENGLISH FARMERS' ASSOCIATION (Limited), 6 Holborn Circus, London, E.C.

PASTIMES
A WEEKLY MAGAZINE OF SPORT & ADVENTURE

FREE TO YOU.
GOLD WATCHES GIVEN AWAY.
To advertise our beautifully illustrated story magazine *Homeland*, we have, during the past few months, Given Away hundreds of pounds in cash prizes and more than fifty thousand watches and other presents to our subscribers. We now have a novel and pleasing proposal to make to readers of this paper who have not yet subscribed to *Homeland*. If you want a beautiful watch, now is your opportunity. For a very short time, to make our paper more widely known, we are freely giving away handsome gold watches and chains of the retail value of £5 5s. to subscribers. We cannot do this for long, and when our present sale has been sufficiently increased, we must cease to do so. For this reason we cannot send these presents to Colonial and foreign subscribers.

Send a postal order for 1/6 to pay for one year's subscription to *Homeland*, and we will at once **send as a free gift** a handsome 18-carat gold-cased **Watch Chain and Charm** complete. Remember this is for a short time only. We have only a limited number to give away free, so send at once, but your subscription will be returned if sent too late to secure this free gift.
The magazine will follow month by month for twelve months by post, but you get this wonderful present at once.
If you wish us to send it specially packed in strong box by registered post we will do so if you send sixpence extra (that is a postal order for 2/-), as an article like this should be registered to insure absolutely safe delivery.—Address, *Homeland* Offices, (86 Dept.), 118 & 119 Newgate Street, London, E.C.

How to Obtain an Ideal Complexion.
A Magnificent Complexion is assured in a few months by the free use of LILLIE POWDER. Its delicate MEDICINAL properties soothe and strengthen the supersensitive nerves of the Skin. It is the most perfect skin FOOD and TONIC of the day. For all ailments of the Skin.
THIS IS WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY:
"The LILLIE POWDER has long been a favourite with all who pride themselves on their complexions. Try the LILLIE POWDER. I am sure you will like it."—*The Gentlewoman.*
Most Beneficial.
"Lillie Powder is most beneficial to the skin, and I shall always use it."—**Phyllis Broughton.**
Most Exquisite.
"I think your new Lillie Powder most exquisite."—**Adelina Patti.**
The Very Best.
"I think your new Lillie Powder quite the very best, and you may be pleased to know I have used it ever since I first went on the stage."—**Ellaline Terriss.**
ORDER IT at once of your Chemist or Hairdresser, and refuse all substitutes, as they may be injurious.
Price 1/- per Box.
Three Tints—White, Rose and Cream.
Invented by Mrs. LANGTRY.
Prepared under the strict supervision of Her Majesty's Perruquier, Mr. W. CLARKSON.
BE SURE It Bears Mrs. Langtry's Certificate.

Digitized by Google

PLAIN SPEAKING.

A. L. T.—Twenty-four members of the House of Commons are total abstainers.

John.—You will find it a peculiarity of Russian railways that their stations are generally two miles or more distant from the towns and villages which they serve. This is on account of the danger of fire, the houses in small places generally being thatched with straw.

O. M.—In the wild, remote, mountainous country of Patagonia a small band of Welsh emigrants thirty years ago established a colony. After encountering many dangers and difficulties, the colony has now arrived at a fairly prosperous stage. It comprises about 3,000 persons, the great majority of whom speak the Welsh language.

L. G.—The month of January has proved particularly fatal to members of Her Majesty's family. January has witnessed the death of the Queen's grandfather, George III. (1820); of her father, the Duke of Kent (1820); of her uncle, Frederick Duke of York (1827); of her aunt, the Princess Elizabeth Landgravine of Hesse Homburg (1840); and of her grandson, the Duke of Clarence (1892). Two occupants of the English throne have also died in January, Henry VIII. (1547) and Charles I. (1649). Two Princes who would, if there had been no revolution in 1688, have sat upon that throne, also died in January—the Old Pretender (1766), and the Young Pretender (1788).

H. F.—The life of an ostrich is commonly thirty years, although eighty years has been claimed for individual cases.

Author.—The favourite method of inducing a person to quit this earth prematurely in Turkey is to place powdered diamonds in his coffee. An English company has been formed to exhume the bodies of those who are suspected of having been poisoned in this manner, and extracting by chemical means the diamond dust which they contain.

Geologist.—The lake of Morat, in Switzerland, has a queer habit of turning red two or three times every ten years, owing to the presence of little aquatic plants. The peculiarity of the matter is, that Lake Morat is the only lake in which this curious growth is developed.

L. T.—The Danes were accustomed to eat six times a day.

Harassed One.—Your lot in life is evidently a hard one. But, take heart, "Harassed One," at any rate, you have the consolation that those who have to work hard for their living generally enjoy longer lives than those who do not.

R. J. S.—The biggest contract ever offered to Messrs. Spiers and Pond was one to supply food for the French forces engaged in the Franco-German war. The offer was made on the breakdown of the French Commissariat Department. It could not be accepted, for its carrying out would have been a breach of England's neutrality.

Mat.—Yes, the soap plant grows in the valleys of California. It is a tall, slender-stemmed liliaceous plant, with purple and white flowers, which played an important part in the economy of the Spanish population, and is still more or less used by the country people. It rises from a subterranean bulb, which is egg-shaped in form, two or three inches in diameter, and enveloped in a thick coating of black, matted, hair-like fibres. This bulb has the detergent properties of soap, cleaning the hands or clothing quite as well as and much more pleasantly than the coarser kinds of soap.

A. G. H.—The Sirdar is Irish by birth, having been born at Crotto House, near Tralee, Co. Kerry.

Sleepless One.—I don't think you will suffer much more from insomnia if you try the following simple plan. Before retiring for the night stand in a place where you know the air to be fresh, and take long, deep breaths very slowly and regularly, so as to relieve the lower part of the lungs of all injurious accumulations. Then darken your sleeping apartment completely, and get into bed.

T. F.—With ordinary service, a good railway-engine ought to last, at least, twelve years.

F. R. intends to go in for frog-eating, and wants to know the best time of the year for this dainty.———Frogs are best for the table in the autumn. They are then fat and sleek, and there is a peculiar and desirable flavour about them at that season not possessed at any other. At this season they are quite desirable, and form a very clever side-dish at any meal.

G. M.—There is one horse for every twenty persons in this country.

B. A. O.—A curious barometer is used in Germany and Switzerland. It is a jar of water, with a frog and a little step-ladder in it. When the frog comes out of the water and sits on the steps, a rain storm will soon occur.

Candle.—The majority of grown people, as well as the children, in ancient Rome rarely lighted a candle unless at dawn. The bedtime in Rome, Athens, Egypt, and other parts of the Mediterranean shore was between seven and nine o'clock in the evening, according to the season. The Turks go to bed early and get up early to this day.

Hanky.—The Empress Josephine was the first to publicly use a pocket-handkerchief. Her teeth were bad, and she gracefully concealed the defect by holding a costly handkerchief before her lips. The ladies of the Court followed her example, and the custom was thus inaugurated as a fashion.

S. T.—In Switzerland and other mountainous countries, the goat leads long strings of animals daily to and from the mountains, but it is in South Africa that it is regularly kept and employed as a leader of flocks of sheep. Should a blinding storm of rain or hail, drive the silly sheep before it, or cause them to huddle together in a corner, so as to suffocate each other, the trained goat will wake them up, and by a method best known to himself, will induce them to follow him to a place of safety.

C. Y. C.—In St. Petersburg every bicyclist is bound to have affixed to the back of the machine a metal plate on which the registered number is displayed in figures large enough to be legible from a considerable distance.

Joan.—The armour given by Charles VII. at Bourges to Joan of Arc was supposed to have been discovered some three years ago. The armour bears the arms that Charles VII. granted her, matches with the descriptions handed down to us, and would be a fit for a girl of 5ft. 3in. It has long hung amongst other suits of armour, and no one suspected that it was Joan of Arc's coat of mail.

T. E.—There are forty-seven Chinese temples in America.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
Double " " "	1	0	0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10	0	0
Half-page " " " ...	5	0	0
Quarter-page " " " ...	2	10	0
Eighth-page " " " ...	1	5	0
Front page, whole " " ...	12	10	0
" half	6	5	0

All spaces above one-eighth of a page are charged at per page rate.

Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, April **4th**, if intended for the Issue on sale April **18th**, and dated April **22nd**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., at Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

IT IS

GOOD to have a pure soap that will not destroy the texture of fine fabric.

BETTER to have a soap that will not harm the tenderest skin; but it is by far the

BEST to have a soap that is not merely harmless, but DIRECTLY BENEFICIAL.

IS

Good because it will not destroy the texture or colour of any fabric.

Better because it will not harm the delicate tissue of any skin.

Best of all, because it is DIRECTLY BENEFICIAL.

SWAN White Floating SOAP is made of oils and fats pure and sweet enough to eat.
SWAN White Floating SOAP will not injure the daintiest or most delicate fabric.
SWAN White Floating SOAP makes damask, and other fine linen, white as the whitest snow.
SWAN White Floating SOAP gives a health-glow to the skin, inducing that "soothing sensation" at once so delightful and so comfortable.

A Purer Soap is beyond the Art of Soapmaking.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

KAPUTINE

SAFE REMEDY CURES

HEADACHE and NEURALGIA

IMMEDIATELY,

And is sold by all leading Chemists in Packets of 18 Doses, 1s.

To ANYONE HAVING THE LEAST DIFFICULTY, it will be sent post free for 12 Stamps by "KAPUTINE Ltd.," Huddersfield; or, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, A. M. Kaputine, Huddersfield, you will receive a free sample.

The fact that "KAPUTINE" is recommended by many leading Medical Men, and is used in National Hospitals and Infirmaries proves that it is THE, THE recognised SAFE REMEDY FOR HEADACHES.

Refuse Substitutes and demand "KAPUTINE," the Safe Remedy. There is no substitute "LIKE IT"; nothing "AS GOOD"; nothing "SIMILAR."

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

Digitized by Google

The YOST TYPE-WRITER

We do not say that there are no other good machines, but we do strongly affirm, and are willing to prove it by sending a machine on inspection and

FREE TRIAL FOR SEVEN DAYS,

that we sell the very best typewriter the world has ever seen.

Catalogues Post Free.

USED BY
The EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA,
The EMPEROR OF GERMANY,
The KING OF WURTEMBERG,
The DUKE & DUCHESS OF YORK,
The ENGLISH, COLONIAL, and CONTINENTAL GOVERNMENTS,
The LEADING RAILWAY Co.'s,
and
More than 35,000 other users.

The YOST TYPEWRITER Co. Ltd.,
50A Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C.

FIRST
in 1888,
FOREMOST
ever since.

DUNLOP TYRES

Handsomely Illustrated Booklet—**"All About Dunlop Tyres for 1899,"** sent gratis and post free on application.

THE DUNLOP PNEUMATIC TYRE COMPANY LTD.,
Alma Street, Coventry.
160 to 166 CLERKENWELL ROAD, LONDON, E.C.
BRANCHES: Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Dublin, &c.

☞ **In fine Powder**

Hudson's Soap

Used in all the "Happy Homes of England"

Digitized by Google